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[Wife
aspects]

THE
EVIDENCE
OF THE
RESURRECTION

C L E A R E D

From the EXCEPTIONS of a late
P A M P H L E T,

Entitled,

*The RESURRECTION of JESUS considered
by a Moral Philosopher; in Answer to
The TRYAL of the WITNESSES, &c.*

Charles Ross



L O N D O N,

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T O T H E
LEARNED AUTHOR

O F

*The Tryal of the Witnesses
of the Resurrection,*

T H E

FOLLOWING SHEETS

ARE INSCRIBED

With all Humility and Regard,

By his most Obedient,

And Devoted Humble Servant,

C. M.

ЛОНДОНСКАЯ ГАЗЕТА

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М. О.

T H E E V I D E N C E O F T H E R E S U R R E C T I O N

Cleared; in Answer to the *Resurrection Considered*; &c.

I.

THE *Considerer* introduces himself and his Book to the World, in a very extraordinary and pompous Manner. *The Tryal of the Witnesses* had, it seems, gone through ten Editions^a unanswered; had (as he most ingeniously expresses himself) miraculously supported the Miracles of the Gospel; had gained an indisputable Conquest, and reached the remotest Corners of Infidelity. What then was to be done in this Distress? Why he is called upon by his Friends to read it, and by his ardent Love to Truth, of answer it; and

^a First Edit. p. 1. *Resurrection Considered.*

seems to think that all the Hopes of Infidelity center in him.

An Author of so much Vivacity, and so full of himself, can hardly be expected to keep the dull Road of Reasoning ; his Wit will sometimes run away with him. Hence it is that we meet with so much Pertness and Spirit in his Performance ; hence proceed those beautiful Expressions of *miraculously supported the Miracles*, the *damnably bad Opinions* of somebody or other ; and the witty Conceit of introducing Ghosts in white Sheets and dark Lanthorns^b, into this serious Argument. Of all which, and many others of equal Politeness, I take leave once for all, and give them up to be enjoyed by the Author and his Admirers, without Disturbance.

But I must needs commend this Author for the open and frank Declaration of his Principles in respect to Religion. Some have pretended Friendship to the Gospel, that they might the more successfully undermine the Foundations of it ; but this Author acts with more Bravery and more Honesty. He says fairly, *In my Opinion great Judgment and great Faith are such Contradictions that they never unite, so as to meet in one Person*^c. I dare say he did not make this Declaration upon any Suspicion he had of his own Judgment. Again,

^b First Edit. p. 43. Third Edit. p. 34. ^c First Edit. p. 6.

with respect to Miracles, he tells us, *every real Miracle is an Absurdity to common Sense and Understanding, and contrary to the Attributes of God^d.*

After these express Declarations one would wonder how this Author could propose himself to the World as a proper Person to make a fair Examination of the Evidence of the Resurrection, which is both the greatest Miracle, and the greatest Article of the Christian Faith. But he had his View in so doing, and has been so good as to acquaint us, what he proposed by his Answer to the *Trial of the Witnesses*; and he shall tell it himself. *My Design is to promote that Veneration for Wisdom and Virtue, which has been debased and degraded by Faith; by a Faith which has not sent Peace on Earth, but a Sword.—Where this foolish Faith bears Sway, the Tree of Knowledge produces damning Fruit; but under the benign Influence of George our King, in this glorious Day of Light and Liberty, this divine Hag and her pious Witchcrafts which were brought forth in Darkness and nourished by Obscurity, faint at the Approach of Day, and vanish upon Sight^e.*

The Faith which the Gospel proposes in *Christ Jesus*, the ever blessed Son of God, and the only Name under Heaven by which we may be saved, is here with an astonishing De-

^d First Edit. p. 64. Third Edit. p. 52.
p. 88. Third Edit. p. 72.

^e First Edit.

gree of Impiety, called *a divine Hag with pious Witchcrafts.* Unhappy Man! what could he mean by this? I pity him from my Heart, But what could he mean by abusing the King, unless he had a Mind to shew, that he is just as good a Subject as he is a Christian?

Every serious Man will read these Passages with Abhorrence; and they are a Warning to every Reader to be upon his Guard against the Representations made of the Doctrines of the Gospel, and the Evidences of Christianity, by so determined, and so inveterate an Enemy to both.

But let us examine this Author in another respect. So little qualified was he to write an Answer to the *Tryal of the Witnesses*, that he did not understand it, when he published his Answer; but mistook sometimes the Objection for the Answer to the Objection, and sometimes *vice versa*; and ascribed to the Author of the Trial the very Opinion he was confuting. A few Instances will explain my Meaning.

At Page 4 (1st Edit.) the *Considerer* charges the Author of the *Tryal* with founding *Faith on Education, and writing in Favour of that Opinion.* To support this Charge he quotes from the *Tryal* the very Words that disclaim that Opinion. The Words are—*What prevailed with those who first received it* (i. e. the Belief of the Resurrection.) *they certainly did not follow the Examples of their Fathers. Here then*

*then is the Point ; how did this Fact gain Credit in the World at first ? Credit it has gained without doubt^f. 'Tis marvellous how the Considerer could read, could transcribe these Words into his Book, and not feel that the Meaning and Intent of them was to lay the Force of Custom and Education quite out of the Case, and to bring the Question to rest upon the original Evidence of the Resurrection at the first, before Custom or Education could possibly have any Influence. It is hard to account for his Mistake, but mistake he does, and goes on for a Page or two together with great Triumph, reasoning against this Phantom of his own raising. Then, says he, *every Story that has gained Credit in the World, as this has done, is also true* ; and concludes with this wise Saying, *believing Truth for Company's Sake is no more meritorious than believing Error*. But he has been so far ashamed of this Blunder, as to drop the whole Passage, and his own Reasoning upon it, in his new Edition.*

The Considerer (p. 5.) says, *'tis argued the Apostles were sincere, therefore what they reported was true*. He does not indeed directly charge the Author of the *Tryal* with arguing thus; but whomsoever he means to charge, he shows plainly, that he never understood the Use or Force of the Argument, drawn from the Topic of Sincerity; which is never applied to

{ *Tryal*, p. 20.

prove that the *sincere* Reporter delivers nothing but *Truth*; for he may be, and often is, imposed on himself; but is used merely to show, that he is not a Deceiver himself, and acting with a Design to impose on others. The *Considerer* has with great Success encountered the Mistake, which he imputes to somebody or other; but the only Thing he has made clear, is, that he did not know what he was writing about. But some kind Friend pointed out this Mistake, and it disappears upon the new Edition.

The next Instance of this kind, with which I shall trouble the Reader, will hardly pass for a Mistake only. Whatever it is, it has received the Approbation of the *Considerer's* second Thoughts, and found a Place in his new Edition.

The Author of the *Trial*, or the Person designed by *B* in the *Trial*, repeats an Objection, which *A*, the Pleader against the Resurrection had insisted on. *There is* (says *B*, or the Author of the *Trial*) *but one Observation more*, which the Gentleman (i. e. *A* the Objector to the Resurrection) made under this Head. Jesus, he says, referred to the Authority of ancient Prophecies to prove, that the Messias was to die and rise again. The ancient Books referred to are extant, and no such Prophecies, he says, are to be found. Now whether the Gentleman, (i. e. the Objector) can find those

those Prophecies or no, is not material to the present Question^g.

Is it not manifest to Sight, that those Words, “ the ancient Books referred to are extant, “ and no such Prophecies to be found,” express the Sense and Opinion of the Objector to the Resurrection? But the Considerer charges it to the Author of the *Tryal* as his own Sentiment, which he could not have done had he quoted the Passage fairly. For this Reason he has altered it, and left out all the Words which expressly refer the Opinion to the Objector. His Quotation stands thus,—*The Author of the Trial^h* (or Mr. Bⁱ) *says that though Jesus referred to the Authority of the ancient Prophecies to prove that the Messias was to die and rise again; and that though the ancient Books referred to are extant, and no such Prophecies to be found, whether the Prophecies can be found or no, it is not material to the present Question.*

I shall leave the Considerer's fair Dealing to be tried upon a Comparison with the Passage, as it stands in the *Tryal*, and as it is transcribed into his Answer: And let him account to his Readers, as he can, for having so grossly imposed on them.

The only Thing here properly to be charged on the Author of the *Tryal*, is expressed in those Words, *whether the Gentleman (i. e. the Objector) can find those Prophecies or no, is not*

^g *Tryal*, p 30.
p. 13.

^h First Edit. p. 20.

ⁱ Third Edit.

material to the present Question. I think this is said very justly ; for surely Believers are not to wait for the Evidence of Prophecy, 'till Infidels can or will see it : and therefore whether the Gentleman (the Objector) could find the Prophecies or no, was not material ; and further, whether he could or not find the Prophecies, it was not material *to the present Question.* The present Question related to the Truth of the Resurrection, considered merely as a Matter of Fact : And as Facts must be proved, not by Prophecy, but by historical Evidence, it was impertinent to talk of Prophecy, when the Enquiry concerned a mere Fact only.

But the *Considerer*, for want of Discernment, or something else, says, *it is granted the Gospel Historians suggest there are Prophecies, which are not to be found in the Books they refer to ; but this is said not to be material.* He leaves out the Words, *to the present Question*, and goes on ; *Strange ! is it not material, whether what the Evangelists say be true or false ? Whether this is a true or false Insinuation to countenance the History ? whether through Ignorance they imagined there were Prophecies which there were not, and so were deluded ? and whether through Design they suggested there were, and so deceived others^k ?* All this is very well ; but before the *Considerer* can be entitled to the

^k First Edit. p. 21. Third Edit. p. 14.

full Merit of it, he must shew what he is doing, and whom he means to confute. He appears to me to be hunting down nothing but a very great Blunder of his own.

The Objector to the Truth of the Resurrection says, (*Tryal*, p. 14.) *In other Cases the Evidence supports the Credit of the History, but here the Evidence itself is presumed only upon the Credit which the History has gained.* The Considerer quotes the Words, and introduces them in this Manner, “ ‘Tis true that *in other Cases, &c^a.* and refers the Reader to the *Tryal*; as if the Words produced expressed the Sense of the Author of the *Tryal* himself. The Considerer was made sensible of this Mistake, and tho’ the Passage still stands, and very improperly, in his new Edition; yet he has taken some Care to cover the Blunder, by dropping the Reference to the *Tryal*.

But let us see in other Instances how fairly the Considerer deals.

The Author of the *Tryal*, to shew that the Jews, in guarding the Sepulchre, betrayed a secret Conviction of the Truth of the Miracles, performed by Christ in his Life-time says,

Tryal, p. 38.

For had they been persuaded that he wrought no Wonders in his Life, I think they would not have

The Considerer quotes these Words thus :

They being persuaded he performed no Miracles in his Life, were

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not

have been afraid of seeing any done by him after his Death. not afraid of seeing any done by him after his Death^b.

Again, p. 39.

The Author of the Tryal, to shew the Inconsistency of Woolston's Scherne, says,

Surely this is a most singular Case ; when the People thought him a Prophet, the chief Priests sought to kill him, and thought his Death would put an End to his Pretensions ; when they and the People had discovered him to be a Cheat, then they thought him not safe, even when he was dead, but were afraid he should prove a true Prophet, and, according to his own Prediction, rise again.

Therefore that they should kill him, that his Death might put an End to all Pretensions ; yet think him not safe, when he was dead is, I must own, a needless and preposterous Fear, and a most singular Case, as the Gentleman (meaning the Author of the Tryal) rightly expresses it.

By this artful Abuse of the Language of the Tryal, he makes the Reader imagine, that he has convicted the author out of his own Mouth.

Once more ; amongst other things amazingly acted, as he expresses himself, the Considerer^c reckons this for one, that St. Matthew

^b First Edit. p. 38. Third Edit. p. 29.
Edit. p. 48. Third Edit. p. 38.

^c First

should

Should be admitted as an Evidence in a Court, to prove a Fact when he was absent ; and for this amazing thing he refers the Reader to p. 42. of the Tryal.

I thought it impossible, that the Author of the Tryal should give any Handle for so impertinent an Objection to the Credit of St. Matthew. St. Matthew is an Historian, and who ever objected to an Historian, that he was not present at all the Transactions he reports ? However I turned to the Tryal, p. 42. but not one Word is there about the Credit of St. Matthew ; nor is it easy to discern what the Considerer refers to without supposing him guilty of a great Blunder, and not to know the Difference between an Historian, and one produced as an Eye-Witness.

The Author of the Tryal objects to the Credibility of the Story made by the Guards of the Sepulchre, because their own Relation shews they were asleep, when the Things they related happened. And to this Purpose he says, *I would ask the Gentleman whether he has any Authorities in Point, to shew that ever any Man was admitted as an Evidence in any Court, to prove a Fact which happened when he was asleep?* This, I suppose, must be the Passage, upon the Strength of which the Author of the Tryal is made a Party to the Objection against the Credit of St. Matthew ; and it shews how well qualified the Considerer is to determine on the Credit of the Gospel Hist-

rians, when he does not apprehend the plainest Thing relating to Evidence, what is necessary to give Credit to an Eye-Witness, and what to an Historian.

After these Instances, there is little Reason to expect from this Hand a judicious or a fair Answer to the *Tryal*.

The *Considerer* seems to me to have set out at first, with a Design only to write against the Credit of the Resurrection, as reported by the Evangelists; and that it was an After-Thought, and meant to give himself some Air of Importance, to work up his Book into an Answer to the *Tryal*. It is plainly a Piece of Patch-Work, and has but little in it to entitle it to be called an *Answer to the Tryal*. Has he weighed the Arguments on both Sides of the Question as stated in the *Tryal*, and shewed where the Author of the *Tryal* either dissembled the Force of the Objection, or failed in the Answer to it? Nothing like it. He does not so much as pretend it. He has found an easier Method of making an Appearance of an Answer to the *Tryal*: some Passages taken independently of the Argument of which they are a Part, he has singled out to furnish Matter of Controversy: but as these were too few in Number to make a decent Appearance of Quotations from a Book, which he professed to answer; he has taken the Liberty to use the Language of the *Tryal* to his own Purpose, and has distinguished it by *Italics*, and referred the

the Reader to the *Tryal*, even where the Words by the Additions and Alterations made by the *Considerer*, are turned to a Sense directly contrary to that, in which the Author of the *Tryal* used them. And by this little Art the *Considerer* appears to an unwary Reader to be quoting and confuting the *Tryal of the Witnesses*.

As much as the *Considerer* has perverted, altered, and misapplyed the Passages he has taken from the *Tryal*, it is nothing in Comparison with his Abuse of the Writers of the New Testament, whom he treats as Impostors and Cheats, and void even of Cunning to tell their own Story plausibly.

St. *Matthew* is charged with *forging* a Prophecy ; and *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, with *fraudulent Designs*^d ; and again, *there is Reason*, he says, *to suspect all the Predictions of it* (*i. e.* the Resurrection) *inserted in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, to be Forgery*^e.

St. *Matthew* has given an Account of guarding and sealing the Sepulchre ; the other Evangelists say nothing of it. Upon this the *Considerer* says, *they tell different Stories*^f. How so? does a Man who says nothing of the Story tell a different Story, or *contradict* the Story? Yes, this is the *Considerer's Logic*, and he says expressly, in a like Case, St. John *says not a Word*

^d First Edit. p. 28. 31. Third Edit. p. 20. 23. ^e First Edit. p. 32. Third Edit. p. 24. ^f First Edit. p. 36, 37. Third Edit. p. 27.

of it, but denies it all^s. Upon this kind of Reasoning, if it is Reasoning, the Considerer charges all the four Evangelists with Forgery; and supposes that St. Matthew's Story being detected, Mark and Luke tell another; theirs being also confuted, John comes and tells a Story different from all the rest: And this vehement Charge is founded in this only, that *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* say nothing about it.

At this rate how easily may all historical Facts be confuted? It is but saying the Histories are forged; and it requires no great Head, provided there be a good Face, to say it of any History in the World. But there will be an Opportunity of examining this Fact of guarding the Sepulchre, and the Considerer's Reasoning upon it, in what is to follow.

But the Considerer, not content to charge the Evangelists with Forgery, has, to impose on those who will rely on his Word, forged Things for them. *John* the Baptist says to the Jews, *think not to say within your selves, we have Abraham to our Father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these Stones to raise up Children to Abraham*^h. Let us see now how the Considerer reports this Passage. His Words are, *Some believe that Absurdities and Contradictions are possible to the Power of God; he can raise Children from the Loins of Abraham out of the Stones of the Street*ⁱ. He plainly saw

^s First Edit. p. 32. Third Edit. p. 23. ^h Mat. iii. 9.
First Edit. p. 47. Third Edit. p. 37.

that the Passage, as it stood in St. Matthew, afforded no Colour for his Abuse, and therefore he adds, *from the Loins of Abraham.* I desire the Reader to consider whose Forgery this is.

At p. 67. of the first Edit. and p. 54. of the third, there occurs one of the most extraordinary Passages that is any where to be found, and shews with what Conscience the *Considerer* applies Scripture to his Purpose. He is treating of the Ascension, and endeavours to prove, that the Accounts given of it by the Evangelists do not agree. With respect to St. John, he says, *John leaves us at all Uncertainties, and says, Jesus went, like a wandering Jew, without bidding them Good-by, the Lord knows where!* To support this Remark he refers to *John* xxi. 19, 20, &c. The Case there is briefly this: Our Lord after his Resurrection foretells to Peter, *by what Death he shall glorify God.* St. Peter enquires, what was to become of St. John? Our Lord says, *if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me,* i. e. What is it to you what becomes of him? Do you follow the Example I have set you, and *glorify God by your Death.* One may sometimes see what Handle People take to misrepresent Scripture; but in this Instance it is difficult to discern what could lead to this wild Conceit. Could it be the Word *follow?* *Follow me;* did the *Considerer* suppose him to mean wandering and rambling over the World?

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It can be nothing else. But does he suppose that no Disciple can follow his Master, but by taking a Journey with him? I apprehend the *Considerer* to be a *Follower* of *Woolston* and the *Moral Philosopher*, but I never enquired how far he travelled with them.

These Instances, which I have selected from many of the same Kind, will shew, how considerable and how fair an Adversary this Gentleman is. I have brought them in one View, that they might not stand in the way, and divert us from attending to his Reasoning against the Truth of the Resurrection.

II.

Before I come to the Points, which more immediately affect the Evidence of the Resurrection, I shall take Notice of one Remark which the *Considerer* has dropt at the Close of his Introduction, and which relates to the Credit of Revelation in general.

It had been observed in the *Tryal*, "that Revelation is by the common Consent of Mankind the very best Foundation of Religion, and therefore every Impostor pretends to it ^k." In answer to which the *Considerer* says, *I conceive that which is the Foundation of any, much less of every false Religion, cannot be the Foundation of the true*¹. What poor Sophistry is this! Cannot this great *Considerer* see the Dif-

^ε *Tryal*, p. 11.

¹ First Ed. p. 17. Third Ed. p. 9.
ference

ference between a real and a pretended Foundation ? Let him try it in his own favourite Virtue, Sincerity. Sincerity is by common Consent the very best Foundation of a good Character, and therefore all Knaves pretend to it. Will the *Considerer* in this Case say, that which is the Foundation of every bad Character, cannot be the Foundation of a good one ? It is to no Purpose to controvert such Points ; and I think this Passage from the *Tryal* was produced, only to give the *Considerer* an Opportunity of entring into his darling common Place of abusing Revelation, and drawing together what has been retailed an hundred times over by all the little Traders in Infidelity, and has been as often answered to the Satisfaction of all sober Enquirers.

The first Point that more directly affects the Credit of the Resurrection, is the Nature and Quality of the Evidence. The *Considerer* begins with complaining grievously, that all the Evidence is on the Side of the Resurrection, and that he can find none against it^a. And this he thinks is a very hard Case upon him. *If the Resurrection, says he, be a Fraud or the Evidence forged, what Books have we to prove it so^b?* This is indeed a hard Case. But if he should take it into his Head to prove that *Cæsar* was not killed in the Senate-house, he

^a First Edit. p. 7. Third Edit. p. 5.
p. 9. Third Edit. p.

^b First Edit.

might begin with the same Complaint ; for all the Evidence would be on one side, and all against him.

But he imagines there was anciently a great Stock of Evidence against the Truth of the Resurrection, but that it has been unhappily lost or destroyed. 'Tis certain, he says, *Books have been wrote by Porphyry, Celsus, and others, which contained what the Christians thought were best answered by stifling and burning.* It is well known from some Fragments of them in Origen, that they contradicted what is related in the Evangelists^e. Who furnishes the Considerer with his Learning, I know not ; but whoever he is, he has cheated him abominably. Fragments of *Porphyry* and *Celsus* in *Origen* ! why *Origen* was dead before *Porphyry* set Pen to Paper. When *Origen* answered *Celsus*, *Porphyry* could not be above sixteen Years of Age, and not above twenty or twenty one when *Origen* died. I imagine by the Order in which he places them, that he took *Porphyry* to be older than *Celsus*, and that *Origen* having wrote against *Celsus*, could not but take notice of *Porphyry* too. But there was indeed about an hundred Years between *Celsus* and *Porphyry*.

Porphyry and *Celsus*, he says, contradicted what is related in the Evangelists ; and so does the Considerer too ; but what then ? Is the Cre-

^e First Edit. p. 8. Third Edit. p. 5.

dit of any History the worse, because it is wantonly contradicted, without Evidence or Authority of any Sort to support the Contradiction? The *Considerer*, I suspect, means to introduce *Celsus* and *Porphyry*, as Witnesses against the History of the Gospel. If he does, he is mistaken. They were just such Witnesses against the Gospel as he is; and for Want of Evidence to contradict the Evangelists, they were forced to rely upon the Disagreements, which they supposed were to be found in the several Accounts given by the Evangelists.

Had there ever been good Evidence against the Gospel History, it could not have been lost in *Celsus's* Time. For *Celsus* lived at no great Distance from the Apostolic Age; at a Time when all Religions were tolerated but the Christian; when no Evidence was stifled, no Books destroyed, but those of Christians. And yet *Celsus* laboured under the same Want of Evidence, as *Woolston* and his Auxiliaries, and had the Gospel only to search (as *Origen* more than once observes) for Evidence against the Gospel. A strong Proof that there never had been Books of any Credit in the World, that questioned the Gospel Facts, when so spiteful and so artful an Adversary as *Celsus* made no Use of them.

Celsus admits the Truth of Christ's Miracles. The Difference between him and *Origen* lies in the Manner of accounting for them; the one ascribing them to the Power of God, the

other to the Power of Magic. So that if the *Considerer* will stand to the Evidence of his own Witness, the Question will not be, whether the Miracles are true in Fact (for that is granted on both Sides) but whether the Truth of the Miracles infers the divine Authority of the Performer? Now can it be supposed that *Celsus* would have admitted the Miracles of *Christ* as real Facts, had he not been compelled to it by the universal Consent of all Men in the Age he lived?

But why does the *Considerer* complain for Want of the Assistance of *Celsus*, and lead his Readers to imagine that the Books of *Celsus* were destroyed because they could not be answered? Does he not know that there is hardly a plausible Argument, produced by *Woolston* or himself, that is not borrowed from *Celsus*? The Truth is, that the Objections of *Celsus* are preserved, and preserved in his own Language. *Origen's Answer* is not a general Reply to *Celsus*, but a minute Examination of all his Objections, even of those which appeared to *Origen* most frivolous; for his Friend *Ambrosius*, to whom he dedicates the Work, desires him to omit nothing. In order to this Examination *Origen* states the Objections of *Celsus* in his own Words; and that nothing might escape him, he takes them in the Order in which *Celsus* had placed them. *Celsus* then, as it happens, is safe; and the *Considerer* needs not lament over him any more.

The Case of *Porphyry* is different ; there is little remaining of him, but some dispersed Fragments to be found in *Eusebius* and *Jerom.* However this is certain from the Account remaining of him, that he had no Evidence against the Gospel History, but what the Gospel itself furnished ; in which he thought he saw, or pretended to see, Contradiction. How indeed should he have any other Evidence, when *Celsus* had no other, who lived so much nearer the Apostolic Age, than he did ?

If the *Considerer* is laying in a Stock of Evidence on the Antichristian Side, he may put down in his List the Emperor *Julian* and the *Talmudic Books* of the *Jews*, together with some others, whose Evidence, such as it is, is still in being. Here then are Witnesses against the Apostles, the most determined Enemies that Christianity ever had ; and yet the *Considerer* will find no Reason to thank them for their Evidence. They agree with *Celsus* in admitting the Miracles, and so in truth serve only to support that Cause, which they meant to destroy.

The Case then standing thus, the *Considerer* must be content to follow the Steps of his great Leaders, and search the Gospel for Objections against the Gospel. This is another Hardship and the Subject of another Complaint, *If the Resurrection be a Fraud or the Evidence forged, what Books have we to prove it so? Can it be expected that an equitable Issue should be obtained*

obtained from what may be fairly reasoned out of their own Report^d ? — If the Considerer had no better Hopes, why did he trouble himself and the World? Did he propose, because nothing could be fairly reasoned out of the Gospel, to reason something out of it unfairly? He has indeed done so; but did not, I suppose, mean to give Warning of it.

But this is not the Whole of his Complaint. *Can that, says he, be esteemed a fair Tryal, where the Evidences are only on one side the Question^e, &c.* Why not? was full and clear Evidence ever rejected, because there was no Evidence to be produced against it? The Case must always be so where the Truth is notorious. The main Facts relating to our Saviour were as public and as well known in *Iudæa* and the neighbouring Countries, when the Gospels were published, as the Coronation of Henry VIII. was known in his Time in *England*; and if the Considerer has a Mind to call that Fact in Question, he will find the Witnesses all on one side.

He goes on. *To find the Truth of a Case by the Testimony of partial Evidence combined against it, must be owned to be a difficult Task^f.*

^d First Edit. p. 9. Third Edit. p. 6. ^e First Edit. p. 7. Third Edit. p. 5. ^f First Edit. p. 9. Third Edit. p. 6.

In the first Place, how does he know the Witnesses are *partial*? it is not a Thing to be taken for granted; and Proof he brings none, I imagine he supposes every Witness to be partial to the Side for which he gives Evidence; and if so, then every faithful Witness to Truth is a partial Evidence; and the more sincerely concerned for the Truth, the more partial still.

Secondly, Why does he call the Evangelists *combined* Witnesses? Is it not the Purpose and Drift of his whole Book, to shew them contradicting one another in almost every Instance? How then were they *combined* together? Was it part of their Agreement to contradict one another? Why did he not tell us what was their View in combining together? We know that they were oppressed by Jews and Heathens, that they attested the Truth of the Facts they delivered at the Peril of their Lives daily, and at last died miserably and violently in Confirmation of the Truth. You see what their Combination tended to!

Another Question the *Considerer* has chosen to debate, is about the Nature of Christ's Kingdom. It very little concerns the Resurrection, but we must take it in our Way. Many Passages^s are produced from the *Tryal*, all speaking to this Effect; " That Jesus did not pretend " to a temporal Kingdom; and that he expound-

^s First Edit. p. 13. &c.

Third Edit. p. 7.

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" ed the ancient Prophecies relating to the " *Messias*, in a different Manner than his " Countrymen did, who expected a temporal " Prince for their *Messias*." Among these Quotations some are taken out of the Mouth of the Pleader against the Resurrection, and ascribed to the Author of the *Tryal*; but this happens so frequently, that it would be endless to take Notice of it, as often as it occurs. But let us see to what Purpose these Passages are produced.

It was a Part of *Woolston's Scheme*, to charge *Christ* with a secret Design of getting temporal Power, notwithstanding he openly disavowed all such Pretensions. In answer to this the Author of the *Tryal* shewed, from the uniform Character and Conduct of *Jesus*, that *Woolston's Notion* was void of all Colour of Support. Does the *Considerer* now enter into the Argument, as it stands in the *Tryal*? No. But he takes the Passages independently of the Argument, of which they are a Part; and thinks that taken by themselves they are not true. Be it so; what then does it signify to the Fact of the Resurrection which he was to disprove? Why all this Parade of many Quotations from the *Tryal*, since they do not relate to the Point in Dispute? Some good Friend, I suspect, had asked the *Considerer* these Questions which he could not answer; and tho' he was unwilling to part with so many Quotations at once, yet, to prevent the same Questions being asked

asked him again, he has in his new Edition confessed, that *be this* (*i. e.* the ancient Prophecies of the Kingdom) *mystically or conditionally true, it concerns not the Resurrection.* Yet let not Truth be denied^a.

Well then; the Credit of the Resurrection is so far safe. But he thinks it not true, that *Christ* declined temporal Power; and *Truth* must not be denied. He goes on to produce Prophecies, that *God would give him the Throne of his Father David*, and says, that he was called *King of Israel, King of the Jews, and rebuked not those who gave him the Title.* And why should he rebuke them, since he claimed that Title, and never denied that he was *King of the Jews?* But the *Considerer* seems not to know that there never was a *Question* between *Jews* and *Christians*, whether *Jesus* was, or pretended to be, a temporal Prince. Both sides agree that he neither was nor pretended to be. But the *Question* was and is, whether, according to ancient Prophecy, the *Messias* was to be a *temporal Prince.* Had not the Prophets declared him to be a great Prince, there would have been no Dispute whether he was to be a temporal or a spiritual Prince. Quoting therefore these Prophecies will not determine the *Question*; for the Doubt is not, Whether there are such Prophecies or no? But what is the Meaning of them?

^a Third Edit. p. 8.

The Considerer fays, that *Jesuſ was commonly called King of the Jews, only he had not the Kingdom*; therefore when he was about to ſuffer for it, he found it was not of this World. This Confefſion he prudently made at a proper Time, tho' it had not the Effect to ſave his Life^b. After what has already appeared of this Author's Spirit, it is in vain to complain of the Impiety of this Charge of Fraud and Deceit upon our Bleſſed Saviour. There is one to whom he muſt anſwer for it. In the mean time, how will he anſwer to reasonable Enquirers the Difingenuity of concealing, that *Jesuſ, ſo far from denying himſelf to be the King of the Jews, confeſſed it before Pilate^c*? And as to the Nature of this Kingdom he declared it *not to be of this World^d*. With what Conscience now does the Considerer ask, how it appears by any thing recorded, that *Jesuſ explained away the kingly Office of the Meſſias*? Explain it away! No. He inſisted on it to the laſt. But if he means to ask, whether *Jesuſ ever explained away the temporal Kingdom*; it is maniſt from every Part and every Circumſtance of his Life, that he never claimed it. If he means to ask, whether *Jesuſ ever explained the Nature of the Kingdom of the Meſſias*; what more is wanting than his Confeſſion to *Pilate*, that he was *King of the Jews*, and that

^b First Edit. p. 15. Third Edit. p. 8.

^c Matt. xxix. 11. Mark xv. 2. Luke xxiii. 3. John xviii. 37. ^d John xviii. 36.

his Kingdom was not of this World ? Was it not sufficiently declaring, that the ancient Prophecies, which foretold the Kingdom of the Messias, did not mean a temporal Kingdom ?

But if Christ did not pretend to temporal Power, the Considerer says, why was the Government alarmed and Jesus looked on as a Person dangerous to the State, who was the best Friend among the Jews the Roman Government had, to preserve the People from enthusiastic Seditions ? If this be true, it was the worst Policy in the World for the Romans to put him to Death^e. The Considerer here has by chance deviated into more Truth than he was aware of. Jesus was indeed the very Person proper to preserve the People from enthusiastic Seditions, and so far a Friend to the Roman Government. But who told him the Roman Government was alarmed ? why he has it from the Tryal ; but according to Custom has taken the Objector's Words, for the Words of the Author of the Tryal. And the Considerer would not have argued upon this Supposition, had he attended in the least to the Gospel History. Where does he read that the Roman Government was alarmed, and thought Jesus a Person dangerous to the State ? Where does he find that the Roman Government persecuted him to Death ? The Jewish Government indeed did : but Pilate came unwillingly into their Measures,

^e First Edit. p. 14. Third Edit. p. 7.

and consented not to his Death, till overborn by Clamour and Sedition.

What the *Considerer* had in view in this confused Discourse about *Christ's* Kingdom, I cannot guess. He seems to think *Jesus* understood the Prophecies to relate to a temporal Kingdom, and in consequence claimed it, and that he did not renounce a *Kingdom of this World*, till driven to it by Despair and Necessity. But where did he learn this Secret? not from the Gospel History, nor yet from any Enemies of the Gospel, whether *Jews* or Heathens; who never have charged *Jesus* with setting up for temporal Power. The *Jews* object to him the Want of temporal Power, which they imagine their *Messias* is to exercise in the fullest Extent, but never accuse him for pretending to it. One would imagine it impossible for any one, who had read the four Gospels or any one of them, to entertain this Conceit.

Look into the Gospel; every Page will afford a Proof that *Jesus*, though he claimed to be the King of the *Jews* foretold in the ancient Prophets, yet he disclaimed all temporal Power and Greatness. When one of the Scribes offered to become his Disciple, what Encouragement did he find? Possibly this Scribe might conceive Hopes of having a Share in the temporal Kingdom, which he and his Countrymen expected. But our Lord undeceives him, and tells him, *the Foxes have Holes,*

and the Birds of the Air have Nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head^f.

When our Lord sent out his twelve Disciples, he orders them expressly to preach, saying, *the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand^g.* In order then to establish this Kingdom, what Power does he give them? were they to issue out Proclamations notifying that the victorious Prince was come, and calling upon all his Subjects to arm, and to attend him? Nothing less. He gives them *Power against unclean Spirits*, and *to heal all Diseases^h.* But as to their Condition in this World, he tells them, they should *be brought before Governorsⁱ* for his Sake, and *be hated of all Men^k;* and advises them for their Safety, *when persecuted in one City to flee to another^l.* Are these Proofs of his claiming temporal Power?

In like Manner, and with like Commission, he sent out the seventy Disciples. They return with great Joy and relate to him their Success: *Lord, even the Devils are subject to us thro' thy Name.* And he said unto them, *I beheld Satan as Lightning, fall from Heaven^m.* You see it was the Kingdom of *Satan* he came to destroy, and not the Kingdom of *Cæsar*.

The Apostles were in the same Mistake with the rest of their Countrymen, and expected a temporal Kingdom; and the Sons of *Zebedee*

^f Matt. viii. 20. ^g Ibid. x. 7. ^h v. 1. ⁱ v. 18.
^k Mat. x. 22. ^l v. 23. ^m Luke x. 17, 18.

were early Solicitors to be first Ministers. Our Lord corrects their Error, and tells them his Kingdom was a very different Thing from the Kingdoms of the World. *Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise Lordship over them—But so it shall not be among you; but whosoever would be great among you, shall be your Ministerⁿ.*

The Considerer thinks no regard is to be had to our Lord's Confession before Pilate. Let us see then whether he had not made the same Declaration to the Rulers of the Jews before, and when he was in no immediate Danger.

The Rulers of the Jews very well knew, that Jesus claimed to be King of the Jews foretold by the ancient Prophets; and being possessed with an Opinion that their wished for King was to be a temporal Prince, they were greatly scandalized at his Pretensions to be King of the Jews, in whom they could discover no Power or Inclination to deliver them from the Roman Yoke. They determine therefore to put him to the Proof, and to force him either to declare against the Roman Government, or to renounce his Pretensions to the Kingdom of Israel. The Pharisees and Herodians address him with profound Respect, the better to cover their ensnaring Question: *Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the Way of God in Truth, neither carest*

ⁿ Mark x. 42, 43.

thou for any Man, for thou regardest not the Person of Men. Tell us therefore what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give Tribute to Cæsar or not? Had our Lord declared against the Roman Power, they would have had Matter of Accusation against him. Had he declared for it, he would in their Opinion have renounced his Claim to be King of the Jews, and given them an Opportunity of inflaming the People against him, who could not bear the Thought, that the King of the Jews should be subject to the King of the Romans. But he perceived their Wickedness and said, Shew me the Tribute Money. When they shewed a Penny, he asked, Whose is this Image and Superscription? They say unto him Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the Things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the Things that are God's. Could a clearer Answer be given to shew, that the Kingdom to be set up by God, and the Kingdom of Cæsar were consistent together, without interfering with each other, since the Jews might pay Obedience to both, without offending either? And if the Kingdom to be set up by God according to ancient Prophecies, was to submit to the Kingdom of Cæsar, it is manifest it could not be a temporal Kingdom; nor the Prince of that Kingdom such a victorious Prince as the Scribes and Pharisees expected. Is not then this An-

• Mat. xxii. 16, 17.

sver to the *Pharisees* and *Herodians* the very same Thing with our Lord's Confession before *Pilate*, That he was indeed King of the *Jews*, but his *Kingdom was not of this World*.

I will refer the Reader but to one Passage more on this Head. In *Matt. xxi.* our Lord, in a Parable, shews the Rulers of the *Jews*, that the Kingdom they expected, would, for their wicked and obstinate Behaviour, be taken from them: an hard Lesson for them to learn, who expected to conquer the World, when once their Kingdom was come! It is said expressly, ¶ 45. that the chief Priests and *Pharisees perceived that he spake of them, and sought to lay Hands on him.*

The Author of the *Tryal* had said that *Jesus* fell into Disgrace with his Countrymen, and suffered for opposing their Notions of a victorious *Messias*. To which the *Considerer* says, *I believe it cannot be proved that Jesus suffered for this Cause* ^p. Very concise! but what Conceit must he have of his own Opinion, if he thinks it ought to pass without Proof for a sufficient Answer to such Evidence?

The next Question started by the *Considerer* is, "Whether *Christ* foretold his own Death and Resurrection^q; and he is willing to think he did not; but for no other Reason that

^p First Edit. p. 13. Third Edit. p. 7.
p. 20. Third Edit. p. 14.

^q First Edit.

I can find, but because the Author of the *Tryal* asserts that he did. The *Considerer* had observed before, *that the Conquest the Tryal seems to have over Mr. Woolston, was occasioned by his granting too much^a*; and he is determin'd to avoid this Fault, and to grant nothing. *I am not sure, says he, that Jesus did foretell his own Death and Resurrection, only that the Evangelists say he did; nor that he referred to the Authority of ancient Prophecies, to prove that the Messias was to die and rise again, only that I read so^b.* What does all this amount to? Has he not manifestly given up this Point to the Author of the *Tryal*? for what did that Author undertake more than to shew from the Evangelists, that Christ *foretold his Death and Resurrection?* and the *Considerer* admits that the Evangelists indeed tell him so. One would think now the Dispute over. No: the *Considerer* will not take their Word. Well then; what Proof has he to the contrary? None; he pretends to none; but is determined not to believe them. I admire at his Modesty in calling his Book an Answer to the *Tryal* only; he might with as good Reason have called it, an Answer to all that ever was, or ever will be published in Defence of Christianity; for all depends on the Credit of the Gospel History.

But he says, the Evangelists report Proph-

^a First and third Edit. p. 10.
Third Edit. p. 14.

^b First Edit. p. 20.

cies which were never delivered ; and this he proves from the Concession of the Author of the *Tryal*. But this Piece of Management (hardly to be called by so soft a Name as a Mistake) has been taken notice of before, to which I refer the Reader ^c.

Let us then examine this Question, Whether *Christ* foretold his Death and Resurrection ?

1. The *Considerer* maintains that the chief Priests and Rulers of the *Jews* never heard of any Prediction of the Death and Resurrection of *Christ*, and hence infers, that they had no Pretence for guarding the Sepulchre, and consequently that the Account given by St. *Matthew* of guarding and sealing the Sepulchre is all Forgery ^d.

2. He admits that *Christ* five times foretold his Death and Resurrection to his Disciples, and that in so plain a Manner, that it was impossible for them not to understand him clearly. But it appearing in the History of the Gospel, that they did not understand him, he infers there were no such Predictions, but that they are mere Forgery ^d.

As he allows the five Predictions to the Disciples to be clear and express, there is nothing wanting under this Head, but to account for what is said in the Gospel, that the Disci-

^c Page 6, &c. Edit. p. 24. 31. p. 24.

^d First Edit. p. 32. 40. . Third

^e First Edit. p. 32. . Third Edit.

ples

ples did not understand what was said to them, which will be considered in due Time.

As to the *Jews*, whether they had any reason to apprehend that *Christ* might probably prove a true Prophet, and rise from the dead, must appear not only from the Predictions said to be given them, but from what they could not avoid knowing, the many Miracles done in his Life Time; for it is the Character of the Person in this Case, that gives Weight to the Prediction. The Author of the *Tryal* put it on this Foot. " It must necessarily be that they had discovered something in the Life and Actions of *Christ*, which raised this Jealousy, and made them listen to a Prophecy in this Case, which in any other they would have despised. — For had the *Jews* been persuaded that he performed no Wonders in his Life, they would not have been afraid of seeing any done by him after his Death^f."

The *Considerer*, in Answer to this Reasoning, resorts in the first place to his usual Charge, that the Account given of the Apprehension the *Jews* were under, and their Concern to guard the Sepulchre, is all Forgery. But out of this forged Account he has taken two Words, which pass with him for authentic History. The *Jews* say unto *Pilate*, Sir, we remember that *Deceiver* said, while he was yet

^f *Tryal*, p. 38.

alive, After three Days I will rise again. Now the Considerer says, the Jews never applied to Pilate; but the whole Relation, every Word of it is a Cheat——excepting only the Words that Deceiver; and from thence he argues thus. *The chief Priests and Pharisees believed Jesus to be a Deceiver, if we take their Opinion from their own Words, viz. We remember that Deceiver said^g.* From this lame, crippled, and at best misrepresented Piece of History, the Considerer draws a Consequence which is to stand against the united Authority of all the Gospels, *viz. that the Jews were persuaded he performed no Wonders in his Life^h.*

What now is to be done? must I transcribe great Part of the Gospels to confute so shameless an Assertion? I would hope that no Christian is so unacquainted with the History of Christ, as to want any Assistance in this Case. But however, to give Satisfaction to all, who are willing to receive it, I will produce some few Passages, in which the Scribes, Pharisees, and chief Priests themselves, were either Eye-witnesses of the Miracles, or appear fully acquainted with them.

Upon our Lord's first Appearance, and healing all manner of Diseases among the People, his Fame went through all Syria—and there fol-

^g First Edit. p. 37. and to the same Purpose, Third Edit. p. 29.

^h First Edit. p. 38. Third Edit. p. 29.

lowed him great Multitudes of People from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordanⁱ. Is it possible when all the Country was thus alarmed with the Miracles, that the chief Priests and Rulers should be the only Persons unacquainted with them? Many of his Miracles were performed in public Places of Resort, in Presence of the Scribes and Pharisees, and they took Counsel against him, how they might destroy him^k. But so far were they from denying that Miracles were wrought, that they endeavour to account for them; this Fellow doth not cast out Devils, but by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils^l. In the very Temple itself the Blind and the Lame came to him, and he healed them^m. And it follows immediately, when the chief Priests and Pharisees saw the wonderful Things that he did—they were sore displeased. When our Lord healed the blind Man, who sat begging by the Way, the Pharisees had the blind Man before them and his Parents also, and examined them strictly as to his miraculous Cureⁿ. And after all their Enquiry they were forced to admit the Truth of the Miracles, however unwilling they were to admit the divine Power of Jesus. The Scribes were Witnesses to the Cure wrought upon one sick of the Palsey, in the Presence of a great Mul-

ⁱ Matt. iv. 23, &c. ^k Matt. xii. 10, &c. ^l Ib.
^j 24. ^m Matt. xxi. 14. ⁿ John ix.

titude^m. When *Lazarus* was raised from the Dead, the chief Priests and Pharisees debate in Council, what was to be done upon it: *What do we, for this Man doth many Miraclesⁿ?*

It would be endless to produce all the Passages of Scripture that speak to the same Purpose. These already cited will enable the Reader to apply the rest, which so frequently occur.

The Question now is, What Effect these Miracles had upon the Scribes and chief Priests? That they were extremely alarmed appears plainly, and that they sought his Life, as the only Method to stop the Influence he gained over the People, is notorious. But were they clear of all Doubts themselves? Had they no Misgivings of Mind, that he might possibly be what he pretended to be? Consider their Behaviour, after they had secured his Person, and carried him before *Pilate*: They accuse him of many Things, and among the rest, of Sedition against the *Roman Government*. Had they believed it themselves, what need of further Examination? What Occasion had they to enquire of a Cheat and an Impostor, whether he was the *Christ* of God, or no? And yet the chief Priests made this Enquiry with the utmost Concern and Solemnity: *I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether*

^m Mark ii. 6.

ⁿ John xi. 47.

thou be the Christ the Son of God^o. Had the chief Priest no Suspicion, no Jealousy that he might be the *Christ*, when he made this solemn Adjuration to him? Would he have used the same Form to the same Purpose to *Barabbas* or any other common Malefactor? The Thing speaks itself, and shews the Anxiety of Mind under which the chief Priest acted, and how far he was from being satisfied, that *Jesus* was an Impostor and a Deceiver.

When our blessed Lord hung upon the Cross, the chief Priests and Elders recovered Spirit and said,—*he saved others, himself he cannot save^p.* He saved others! What! do they mean that he never wrought any Miracles, as the *Considerer* supposes? Quite otherwise, they acknowledge his Miracles by which others were saved, referring ('tis probable) to his raising the Dead; but they imagined now they had found the Extent of his Power, and that he *could not save himself*. It will perhaps be said, this was Mockery. Be it so; there was no Mockery in saying; *he saved others*; the Insult is expressed in the other Part, *himself he cannot save*. They go on with their Mockery; *if he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the Cross*. But why all this Triumph in being delivered from the King of *Israel*? had they never suspected that he might possibly prove so

^o Matt. xxvi. 63.

^p Ibid. xxvii. 41.

indeed, what Occasion for this sudden Joy and Exultation ?

But this Mirth did not last long. When Christ died, Nature seemed to die with him ; there was Darkness over all the Earth, the Sun was darkened and the Veil of the Temple was rent in the Midst^q. The Roman Centurion was so affected with it, that he glorified God saying, *This was a righteous Man.* And all the People that came together to that Sight, beholding the Things which were done, smote their Breasts and returned^r. In what Manner the chief Priests and Scribes behaved on this Occasion, we are not told. Probably they withdrew silently, unwilling to discover any Fear or Apprehension before the People. But could they be unaffected ? If ever they had heard of our Lord's Prophecy, that he would rise again, could they help rememb'ring it now ? They had seen him expire on the Cross, but that was no Ease to their Minds in reflecting on the Prophecy of his Resurrection ; for he had foretold his Death and the Manner of it, as well as his Resurrection. The first Part they had seen accomplished, and had Reason to fear the last would be so.

Lay these Things together : The chief Priests had been Witnesses of his Power to work Miracles in his Life Time ; they knew he claimed to be King of the Jews ; they

^q Luke xxiii. 44, 45.

^r v 47, 48.

knew he had owned to *Pilate*, that he was King of the *Jews*; and under a most solemn Adjuration from the chief Priest, even when he was his Prisoner, he had confessed that he was the *Christ* the Son of God, and that they should see him again coming in Glory. They had heard him even on the Cross maintain his Character, and promise Paradise to the penitent Thief; they saw the Sun darkened, the Veil of the Temple rent; the *Roman* Guard at the Cross, and all the Spectators astonished.— Surrounded with this amazing Scene, could they despise the Predictions of his Resurrection? Could they remember them without great Apprehensions, that they might prove true? Whoever can suppose it, not only contradicts the express Declaration of the Gospel History, but shews himself to be but little acquainted with the Sentiments of human Nature.

But here the *Considerer* stops us again. He says, he finds no Account, where or when such public Prophecy was delivered before the Priests and Pharisees, in any of the four Evangelists^a. But what if such Prophecies were delivered before others, and reported by Persons of Credit, to the chief Priests and Pharisees, will not that be sufficient? He thinks not; but all the Reason he has for thinking so is, because they say to Pilate, *We remember that Deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three Days I will rise.*

^a First Edit. p. 23. Third Edit. p. 16.

again. Now, says he, *the Words*, we remember, signify that they heard him say so. It is very hard Work to be obliged to defend against such a Writer, not only common Sense, but common Language. Where does he learn that the Word *remember* is never used, but of Things spoken directly to ourselves? Cannot a Man remember what he reads and what is reported to him? The chief Priests do not say, *We remember he said to us*, but, *We remember he said, while he was yet alive*; but to whom he said, or how it came to their Knowledge, they do not say.

The *Considerer* thinks the *Jews* could not possibly understand, what our Saviour said of the Sign of *Jonas*, to relate to his Resurrection. I differ entirely with him; and though I do not suppose our Saviour did intend it as a clear Prophecy, to be understood at the Time it was spoken; yet the Words used came so near to a Description of a Resurrection, that if once the *Jews* became at all apprehensive of a Resurrection, they could not but apply our Saviour's Words to it. But be this as it will; let us examine whether the chief Priests and Scribes had not other Ways of coming to the Knowledge of what they affirm, that *Jesus* said in his Life Time, *After three Days I will rise again.*

The *Considerer* admits that our Lord did five Times foretell to his Disciples, that he should die and rise again the third Day. So plain and

and clear he takes these Predictions to be, that he cannot believe there is any Truth in the Gospel, when it tells us, the Disciples understood them not. But though they did not understand the Meaning of the Prophecy, for Reasons to be given hereafter, yet they understood the Language, or the Import of the Words; or else what did St. Peter (if he understood not the Words) reprove his Lord for, when he foretold this Event? If they understood the literal Sense of the Words spoken to them, they might report them, and others understand the Meaning, though they did not. And thus at least, the chief Priests might come to know, that *Jesus* had foretold his Resurrection.

But the *Considerer* seems to suppose that these Predictions were private, given to the Apostles only, and that they were enjoined Secrecy; and for the Sake of his Argument, he is willing for once to suppose the Apostles to act honestly, and to keep the Secret; and consequently that the Report of these Prophecies could not reach the chief Priests. But his Reasoning is founded on two Mistakes; for first it does not appear that all the five Predictions were made to the Apostles only. Secondly, it is plain in the Gospel History, Secrecy was not enjoined with respect to these Predictions.

A little Attention to the History will clear up these Facts.

We read in St. *Luke* of Christ's Disciples,

before ever he had chosen Apostles; and it is said expressly, *Luke vi. 13.* *He called his Disciples to him, and out of them he chose twelve, whom also he named Apostles.* And at ¶ 17. they are distinguished from the *Company of Disciples*, who attend him. His twelve Disciples or Apostles are sent out to preach, *Luke ix. 1.* Seventy other Disciples are sent with like Commission, *Luke x. 1.* These last were Disciples, though not Apostles. This being the Case, there is no Reason to conclude, that when the Gospel tells us, that our Lord made any Declaration to his Disciples, that such Declaration was made to the Apostles only. And it is observable, that when the Evangelists intend to distinguish the Apostles from other Disciples, they call them either *Apostles*, or the *Twelve*, and not simply Disciples. Thus, *Luke ix. 1.* *When he had called the twelve Disciples, he gave them Power, &c.* St. Matthew likewise denotes by the same Character *his twelve Disciples*, *x. 1.* and in the following Verse calls them *Apostles*. In the vith of St. John the Distinction is most evident; at ¶ 66. we read, *From that Time many of his Disciples went back, and walked no more with him.* It follows; *then said Jesus unto the Twelve, Will ye also go away?* The Disciples then present at our Lord's Discourse were more, probably many more, than the Apostles. It is not therefore necessarily to be concluded, that, when our Saviour foretold his

Resurrection to his Disciples, none were present but the twelve Apostles.

Let us now take the Predictions as they are ranged by the *Considerer*. The first is made to the Disciples^b; the second only to *Peter, James, and John*^c; the third to his Disciples^d; and the fourth and fifth were to the twelve Apostles only^e. And it is observable, that all the Evangelists who mention the second Prediction, take Care to inform us, that it was given to *Peter, James, and John* only; and all who report the fourth and fifth, say expressly, it was given to the Twelve only. How comes it then to pass, that in reporting the first and third, they leave it at large, and tell us that these Predictions were made to the Disciples? Is there not Reason to suppose, that they were made to more than to the Twelve, who in the other Instances are distinguished as the only Persons present?

The *Considerer* observes upon the third Prediction, that St. *Mark* says, *he passed through Galilee, and would not that any Man should know it, for he taught his Disciples, The Son of Man is delivered, &c.—and shall rise the third Day*^f. Upon which the *Considerer* says, *Observe — the Reason why Jesus desired Privacy*

^b Matt. xvi. 13. 21, &c. Mark viii. 27. 31. Luke ix. 18. 22. ^c Matt. xvii. 1. 9. Mark ix. 2. 9.

^d Matt. xvii. 19. 22. Mark ix. 29. 31. ^e Matt. xx. 17, &c. Mark x. 32, &c. Luke xvii. 31, &c. Mat. xxvi. 20. 32. Mark xiv. 17. 28. ^f Mark ix. 30, &c, was,

was, because he told this to his Disciples, and would have no Body else know it. That our Saviour told this to the Disciples and not to the Multitude, is admitted. But the Question is, who these Disciples were, whether the Twelve only, or others together with them; and the Considerer's Observation is of no Moment towards determining this Point.

I do not pretend to affirm, that the Twelve may not be sometimes meant, where *Disciples* only are mentioned without any other Distinction; but, for the Reasons given, the Considerer had no Right to take it for granted, that all the Predictions were given to the Twelve only, and to raise Speculations upon this Supposition.

Had the Considerer known, what a due Attention to the Gospels would have taught him, the Reason of our Lord's opening to his Disciples and Apostles the Sufferings he was to undergo, he would not have suspected any Deceit in his Conduct. When our Saviour gathered Disciples at first, and out of them chose twelve Apostles, he sent them out to preach that the *Kingdom* was at hand, and gave them great Powers over unclean Spirits, and all Diseases. After some time he enquires of them, what the World thought of him; they report to him the different Opinions the Country had of him. He then asks, *But whom say ye that I am?* Peter in the Name of the rest answers, *Thou art the Christ.* Upon which he began imme-

immediately (as the three Evangelists expressly observe) to teach them what things the Son of Man should suffer, and that he should rise the third Day. Consider now what was the Connexion between St. Peter's Confession, and the Prediction of the Sufferings and Resurrection of *Christ*, which so closely followed it. The Disciples had preached the Approach of the Kingdom, had found, by the Powers bestowed on them, what Power their Master had; and our Lord now perceived upon the Confession of *Peter*, that they took him to be the *Christ*. He well understood what Consequences this Notion would produce; he knew the Opinion of the *Jews* in general, and of the Disciples too, was, *That Christ abideth for ever^s.* and was to be subject to no Power, but to exercise Power and Dominion without End, which they likewise apprehended to be temporal Power and Dominion. Our Lord, who took all proper Occasions to disclaim temporal Power, found it necessary now to guard the Conduct of his Disciples, who were very likely to give Umbrage to the *Jews*, by the Hopes they conceived themselves of seeing their Master a great temporal Prince. To prevent these ill Effects, he charges them in the first Place to tell no Man, *that he was the Christ*; for such open Declaration to the People, considering what Notion they had of the *Christ* they ex-

^s John xii. 34.

pected.

pected, would have amounted to a Claim of temporal Power. In the next place, to moderate the Expectations of his Disciples, and to beat down the Pride and Vanity, which would naturally arise from them, he tells them he was to suffer many things, and even Death itself ; but at the same time, to keep them from absolute Despair, he gives them to understand that he should rise again.

This Doctrine he *began* to teach upon the Occasion mentioned, as the Evangelists particularly remark, intimating that it was frequently repeated and inculcated. So little were the Disciples prepared to receive it, that St. Peter rebuked his Master for talking about suffering ; *Be it far from thee, Lord ; This shall not be unto thee*^h. Which explains another Passage in the following Chapter, very much abused by the Considerer, where our Saviour foretells again, *The Son of Man shall be betrayed into the Hands of Men. — They shall kill him, and the third Day he shall rise again ; and they were exceeding sorrowful*ⁱ. He subjoins to this a Passage from St. Mark, where our Saviour tells the Disciples, *the Son of Man must be killed, and, after he is killed, he shall rise the third Day* : and they understood not that Saying^k. Hear now the Considerer ; 'Tis equally strange, says he, that

^h Matt. xvi. 22.

ⁱ Matt. xvii. 22, 23.

^k Mark ix.

they should be sorry for what they did not understand, as that they should not understand what they were sorry for^a. Was ever any thing so perverse! Is it not plain they were sorry to hear how much he was to suffer; and that the Saying which they did not understand was his *rising again from the Dead?* They could not conceive how *Christ* could die, nor what could be meant by his rising again. Is there any Inconsistency in this? none, but to such as are willfully blind.

Our Saviour found it necessary on this Occasion, not only to acquaint his Disciples with the Sufferings he was to submit to, but the People also, in order to prevent their having wrong Notions of him and his Kingdom, should they hear or suspect him to be the *Christ*; and therefore he adds immediately,— *he called the People unto him, with his Disciples, and said, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow me^b.* So far was our Lord from making a Secret of his Sufferings, or giving the People any Hopes of a temporal Deliverance!

But the *Considerer* supposes, that the Apostles were enjoined Secrecy, and forbid to publish these Predictions. Upon the Strength of which Suppositions he argues, that the chief Priests could know nothing of these Predictions. The Apostles are indeed enjoined Secrecy, not with

^a First Edit. p. 30. Third Edit. p. 22. ^b Mark ix. 34.

respect to the Death and Resurrection of *Jesus*, but with respect expressly to this Point only, *that he was the Christ*. St. Matthew has so determined this, that there can be no Doubt; *Then charged he his Disciples, that they should tell no Man, that he was Jesus the Christ*. After the Transfiguration, that the Disciples, who had seen his surprizing Glory, should not from thence raise false Notions of his Power, he thought proper to enjoin them Secrecy till after the Resurrection: But Secrecy in what? not that he was to suffer and to rise again, but Secrecy with respect to the glorious Vision they had seen, and the Voice from the Cloud, which proclaimed him *Christ the Son of God*.

Lay now these Things together, and consider, whether it was not probable that the chief Priests had perfect Intelligence even of these Predictions. Our Saviour never made a Secret of them; and as some of them were delivered to his Disciples in general, and many of his Disciples forsook him (as we read in the sixth of St. John) the chief Priests, who were very inquisitive into the Conduct of *Jesus*, might by Report from the Apostles themselves, or at least by Report from those Disciples who forsook him, have perfect Knowledge of these Prophecies. But let us go on to other Prophecies. The Considerer says, he has examined St. John, and finds that he says not a

Word of it, but denies it all^d. If he says not a Word of it, I would fain know in what Words he denies it all. But these Beauties occur too frequently to be attended to. As to his Examination of St. John, I am by no means willing to rely on it, and must beg Leave to examine after him. But how comes he to be so surprised to find the Prophecies of Christ's Death and Resurrection, so plainly contained in other Gospels, omitted in St. John? Did he never hear that St. John, who outlived the other Evangelists, was desired by the Bishops of Asia to publish a Gospel, to perfect and compleat the Relation of Christ's Life and Doctrine? They had without Question heard many Things of him, not recorded by the other Evangelists; and thought it of great Importance to the Christian Church to have them transmitted to Posterity, with the Authority of an Apostle. St. John therefore wrote his Gospel, not with a Design of repeating what the other Evangelists had fully delivered, but chiefly to preserve the Memory of what they had omitted. These Prophecies, therefore, being (as the Considerer admits) so very clearly contained in the other Gospels, was the very Reason why St. John omitted them. Whoever with tolerable Care compares St. John with the other Gospels, will find this to be frequently the Case. And it will appear plainly to be so, in

* First Edit. p. 32. Third Edit. p. 23.

the History of the Women who went first to the Sepulchre, which there will be Occasion soon to consider.

But though St. John, for the Reason already given, has omitted expressly to repeat the Predictions mentioned by the other Evangelists, yet I own it would be surprizing to find no mention made by Christ in his Life Time, of the Circumstances of his Death and Resurrection; considering how many Discourses of our Lord to his Disciples and others are reported in St. John's Gospel. Let us enquire then.

In the twelfth and following Chapters, a great Part of our Lord's Discourses to his Disciples plainly refers to the Predictions he had given them of his Death and Resurrection. *The Hour is come*, says our Lord, *when the Son of Man should be glorified*. Of what Hour he speaks appears ¶ 27. *Now is my Soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this Hour; but for this Cause came I unto this Hour.* And at Chap. xiii. 1. *And when Jesus knew that his Hour was come, that he should depart out of this World, &c.* The Expression made use of by Jesus, *the Hour is come*, supposes the Disciples had Notice before, that such an Hour was to be expected. If so, these Passages have Reference to the Predictions recorded in the other Gospels; if not, they are of themselves Predictions, at least of

his Death. That our Lord himself meant these as Predictions is manifest in Chap. xiii. 19. where having said, that *Judas* should betray him, he adds, *Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.* Having given them this Notice of his Death, he endeavours to support their Spirits under the Expectation of it.—^f *Let not your Heart be troubled—I go to prepare a Place for you—I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you^g.* *Ye now therefore have Sorrow, but I will see you again, and your Heart shall rejoice, and your Joy no Man shall take from you^h.* *A little while and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see meⁱ.* These and many other like Passages in St. *John* relate plainly to the Death and Resurrection of *Christ*; of which, if you take the *Considerer's* Word, St. *John* has said nothing. So far were these Predictions from being delivered as Secrets to the Apostles, that St. *John* informs us, he foretold his Sufferings to many others. When *Nicodemus* came to him, he tells him, *that as Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up^k.* The same Thing in the same Language is said to the People^l. The *Considerer* will say here is another Riddle; what are we to understand by *lifting up*? Can you have a better Interpreter than St. *John* himself? He

^f John xiv. 1, 2. ^g v. 18. ^h xvi. 22. ⁱ Ib.
16. ^k Ib. iii. 14. ^l Ib. viii. 28.

will tell you, that our Lord used this Expression, *signifying what Death he should die^m.* And that the Language was well understood at the Time, appears by the Answer the People made him ; *We have heard out of the Law, that Christ abideth for ever ; and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted upⁿ ?* In Consequence of this Prediction he tells the Pharisees, *Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me and shall not find me, and where I am, thither ye cannot come^o.* Take now these Sayings of St. John, and apply them to the Sign of Jonas, and the Exposition of it given by our Lord, that the Son of Man should be *three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth*, and they will give Light to each other, supposing the Jews to have had no clearer Predictions of Christ's Death and Resurrection before them. But that they had clearer, has, I think, already appeared.

But there is still one way more by which this Intelligence might come to them. The last Prophecy of his Death and Resurrection was given at his last Supper to the twelve Apostles : Judas was at the Supper, and heard the Prophecy, and went directly to the chief Priests to concert Measures for apprehending Jesus. Can you imagine, that they did not enquire,

^m Chap. xii. 33. ⁿ Ib. ver. 34.

* Chap. vii. 33, 34.

where his Master was, and what he was doing ? Can you imagine that *Judas* would omit to entertain them with an Account of the Despair in which he left him, prophesying of his Death which he found unavoidable, and filling his Disciples Heads with a silly Notion of his rising again ? If it is natural to suppose this to have been the Case, you see a plain way, by which the chief Priests came to know that *Jesus* said in his Life-time, *that he would rise after three Days.*

The *Considerer* having proved, as he supposes, that the chief Priests knew nothing of any Prophecy of a Resurrection, makes use of it to charge St. *Matthew* with a Forgery, in the Story he relates of their guarding the Sepulchre. *Can any Man of common Sense think it probable, that the Priests and Pharisees should be alarmed about the Resurrection of Jesus, if they never heard any thing more of it than has been mentioned*^p ? Whether the chief Priests were as unacquainted with the Prophecies of the Resurrection, as he supposes, must be left to the Reader upon what has been already said.

But the *Considerer* has other Objections against the Story, told by St. *Matthew* of guarding the Sepulchre, which must be attended to. *'Tis strange that Jesus should so expressly foretel his Resurrection to his Disciples, and say nothing plainly of it to the Scribes and Pharisees, yet that*

^p First Edit. p. 33. Third Edit. p. 24.

they should be so alarmed with the Words of a Man they did not believe, as to watch for it, and the Disciples not understand or expect it^q. In stating this Case the Considerer takes it for granted, that the Scribes and Pharisees had no Notice of a Resurrection, but from the dark Intimations to them, that the Sign of Jonas, &c. should be given them. If I have given the Reader Satisfaction that the Case was otherwise, and that the Scribes and Pharisees were apprized of much clearer and more express Prophecies of the Resurrection, there will be no Occasion to give any farther Account of their Solitude in guarding the Sepulchre. But one Question still remains; How came the Disciples not to understand these Prophecies, and to have no Expectation of a Resurrection? The Fact is admitted, and we are called upon to give an Account of their Behaviour.

There is, I think, but one way of accounting for the Actions of Men; which is by comparing them with their Opinions and Persuasions, and the Circumstances they were in at the Time of doing such Actions; and considering what Men under such Circumstances, and such Persuasions would naturally do. And in this Method a very reasonable Account may be given, both of the Conduct of the Rulers of the Jews, and of the Disciples.

^q Ib.

Consider now; it was the general and firm Persuasion of all the *Jews*, of the Rulers and Disciples equally, that *the Christ*, whenever he came, *was to abide for ever*; to be a Prince of Power, to subdue his and his Country's Enemies with uninterrupted Success. This Proposition therefore, *that the Christ should die*, according to the *Jewish* Notion, contained an absolute Absurdity. Now the Disciples were strong in this Opinion, that *Jesus* was the *Christ*; they were confirmed in it by every fresh Instance of Power and Authority which they saw him exert. Our Lord was sensible how this Opinion would operate, and therefore, from the Time that he found they believed him to be the *Christ*, he began to preach to them, what he was to suffer, and that he was to die and rise again. How they received these Declarations, appears from St. Peter's rebuking our Lord for making them, and from many other Instances which need not be particularly referred to. Add to this, that all their Hopes, all their Expectations depended on their Master's being a powerful Prince. So that to think of his dying was contrary to all they believed of *Christ*, and contrary to all they hoped for themselves. To overcome all their Prejudices and all their Passions at once was more than they were able to do. The Prophecies spoke so plainly of the Sufferings of *Christ*, that they were surprised and afflicted to hear them; but how to understand them they

knew not, because taken literally they appeared inconsistent with the Faith they had professed, *that Jesus was the Christ.* As little did they apprehend what *rising again* meant; and how should they understand it? Since they could not conceive how he could dye, they could have no Notion how, or in what Manner, he could rise. Possibly they thought there was something mysterious in it. It was usual with their Master to discourse them, as well as the Multitude, in Parables; and to use common Expressions in a Sense that was hidden and mysterious. They had been long accustomed to this Sort of Language, and had frequently been puzzled with it. When he bade them to *beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees*^a; they had little Doubt about the Meaning of so common a Phrase, but the Matter they quite mistook. And when he was in the Temple, disputing with the *Jewish Doctors*, he said he was *about his Father's Business*^b; the literal Sense of the Words was obvious enough, but the Meaning was not understood. He told his Disciples at another Time, that *he had Meat to eat, which they knew not of*^c; not meaning, as they were ready to understand it, common Food, but something of quite another Nature.

Thus when our Lord talked to his Disciples of suffering and dying, though such Language

^a Matt. xvi. 6.

^b Luke ii. 49.

^c John iv. 32.

at the first must needs alarm and afflict them; yet it was according to their Notions impossible to be true in the literal Sense. What then was more natural than to conclude, that their Master had some hidden Meaning? We have a plain Instance of this in a like Case. The Jews looked upon a Man as defiled, that had eaten with unwashed Hands; but our Saviour tells the Scribes and Pharisees, *Not that which goeth into the Mouth defileth a Man, but that which cometh out e.* What Words could be plainer? But the Thing being so opposite to Jewish Maxims and Practice, the Disciples no more understood how it could be, than how the *Messias* could suffer and dye; and therefore Peter desires his Master to *declare unto them the Parable e.* These Prepossessions continued 'till after the Resurrection. When their Lord was crucified, all their Hopes dyed with him; and when he was risen again, it was some Time before they could credit their own Eyes, and be persuaded that they really beheld him. As strange as this may appear to the *Considerer*, I can see nothing unnatural in it.

Suppose now this Account of the Disciples Want of Understanding to be true, it shews indeed their Honesty and Sincerity in reporting it fairly. But suppose (as the *Considerer* supposes) that it is all forged, I would fain

know, what Policy there was in the Contrivance. He says, he suspects some *fraudulent Design* in it; but what Purpose was or could be served by this Fraud? Did the Apostles get any thing, either Honour or Profit, by relating their own Prejudices and Hardness of Belief?

But what is to be said for the chief Priests? how came they to be apprehensive of a Resurrection. They no more believed that *Christ* the King of the *Jews* could dye and rise again, than the Disciples did. Very true; but that Prejudice stood not in their Way, for they did not admit *Jesus* to be *Christ*. If they had, they would not have attempted to kill him. Why then did they fear his Resurrection? The plain and clear Answer is, Because he had foretold it: for it was one Thing to believe him to be a great Prophet, and another to believe him to be the *Christ*. That this was a well known Distinction amongst the *Jews* appears from the Discourse of the two Disciples going to *Emmaus*; who, though they had given over all Hopes that *Jesus* was the *Christ*, were still firm in the Persuasion that he was a *Prophet mighty in Deed and Word before God and all the People*^f. Now the *Jews* had been Witnesses to so many Wonders and Miracles wrought by him, that, whether they

^f Luke xxiv. 19.

thought

thought him to be the *Christ* or no, they could not but suspect that he was a great Prophet at least, and might possibly come from the Grave armed with Power, to take Vengeance of their wicked and cruel Treatment of him. This was but a natural Apprehension; and their Fears and guilty Consciences added Weight to every Suspicion of this Kind; and they were exactly in *Herod's Case*, who, when he heard the Fame of the great Miracles which *Jesus* performed, said, *This is John the Baptist, he is risen from the Dead; therefore mighty Works do shew forth themselves in him^g.* What is there in this, that is not natural and probable?

Let us hear what the *Considerer* says to it: *If we take the Opinion of the chief Priests and Pharisees from their own Words, as delivered by St. Matthew, they believe Jesus was a Deceiver^h, and appear afraid, not of his rising in the Day, but of the Disciples stealing him away in the Nightⁱ.* All that the *Considerer* says here depends upon his supposing, that the chief Priests and Pharisees spoke their real Sentiments to *Pilate* without any Disguise; for otherwise, if they used any Art, or formed a Story merely as a Pretence to obtain a Guard to watch the Sepulchre, nothing can be concluded from

^g Matt. xiv. 2.

^h First Edit. p. 37.

ⁱ Third Edit. p. 29.

what

what they tell *Pilate*, but this only, that they wanted a Guard to secure the Sepulchre. Put the Case that they were convinced of his Miracles, apprised of the Prophecy of his Resurrection, and under a real Apprehension, that it might be fulfilled; and that, to satisfy their Doubts, they wanted to get a Guard; I would fain know what sort of Speech to *Pilate*, the *Considerer* would make for them. Would he have them say, "Sir, this Person whom you " crucified at our Instigation was indeed a " mighty Prophet, and the Hand of God was " with him in performing many wonderful " Works: He said too in his Life Time, that " he would rise from the Dead after three " Days, and we are very apprehensive that " he will rise indeed. Let therefore the Se- " pulchre be guarded." If these had been indeed their real Sentiments, would they have told them to *Pilate*, after they had extorted from him the Condemnation of *Jesus*, by representing him as a Malefactor worthy of Death, and as an Enemy to the *Roman* Government? No body can think it. They were under a Necessity, whatever their private Thoughts were, of carrying on the Shew before *Pilate*, of treating *Jesus* as a Deceiver, and pretending another Reason than the true one for desiring a Guard, *viz.* for fear his Disciples should steal away the Body. To argue therefore, that the chief Priests really believed all that they

they pretended to *Pilate*, is childish and ridiculous.

I have laid together the several Predictions of our Lord's Resurrection, and the Circumstances that attended them, in order to shew, what little Reason the *Considerer* had to suppose the chief Priests entire Strangers to them; upon which one Mistake all his Reasoning against guarding and sealing the Sepulchre depends. The *Considerer* asserts, that the chief Priests had no Prophecy of the Resurrection, but what could be deduced from the Sign of *Jonas*; and that, he says, could not be understood by them. Let us admit it, and see what the Consequence will be. Is a Prophecy no Prophecy unless it can be understood by every Body at the Time it is given? If the *Considerer* can persuade the World of this, he will do more towards destroying the Credit of Prophecy, than all his Predecessors have done from *Celsus* to this Time. We often find *Jesus* speaking to the *Jews* in Parables, and explaining them clearly to his Disciples. The Case here was much the same with respect to the Prophecies of the Resurrection. Those to his Disciples were clear; those to the Scribes enigmatical, yet delivered in Terms so corresponding to the Event, that, when the Event happened, the *Jews* could not doubt whether the Prophecy related to it. The same may be said of that other Prophecy; *Destroy this Temple,*

ple, and in three Days I will raise it up^c. The Disciples understood not this, till after Jesus was risen ; but when the Event had explained the Terms, the Prophecy was clear, and had the Effect that all Prophecy is meant to have, that *when the thing comes to pass, we may believe.*

But the Considerer thinks the Prophecy from the Case of Jonas, not only dark and unintelligible at first ; but, when understood and applied to the Resurrection, *false in Fact in two Respects* ; I suppose he means it did not correspond to the Fact foretold in two Respects. Let us hear the Charge.

First, *The Son of Man was to lie three Days and three Nights in the Earth*; whereas Jesus lay but the Time of one Day and a half, that is two Nights and a Day^d. Secondly, *The Sign promised to be given, was not given to those it was promised to*^e, i. e. to that evil and adulterous Generation.

It is somewhat strange, that this great Writer should be content to tread the dull Road of vulgar Infidels and Sceptics ; repeating Difficulties and Objections, that have been a thousand Times proposed, and as often confuted ; but it is still more strange, that they should be such as are fully considered, and most clearly explained in the very Book he professes to an-

^c John ii. 19.

^d First Edit. p. 27. Third Edit. p. 19.

^e First Edit. p. 28. Third Edit. p. 20.

fwer. How comes he to pass over all that is said in the *Tryal* upon this Point? Why such an affected Silence here? It would by no Means have answered the *Considerer's* Purpose, to take Notice how that Author has explained *Christ's* lying three Days in the Sepulchre; but I can promise the Reader, it will abundantly answer his Trouble to consult him upon this Subject; and, if he has any Doubts or Scruples in the Point, he may there receive Satisfaction. It may be unnecessary to add any thing to what has been already said; but that the *Considerer* may not think himself entirely neglected, I shall give a short Answer to his Objection, referring for the rest to the *Tryal* itself.

It is well known that the *Jews* reckoned their Time inclusive; in their Computation of Days, the first Day and the last were included in the Number. From one Sabbath to another they reckoned eight Days, and this when the Computation begun at the Close of the first, and ended at the very Beginning of the second. And yet in this Case there cannot be more than six solar Days and seven Nights; and consequently there is the very same Deficiency of two Days and a Night, which the *Considerer* charges upon the Account given of *Christ's* Resurrection. Three Nights and three Days, or three *νυχθίμερα*, were in common Language the same as three Days: They were equivalent Expressions and used the one for the other^a.

^a So forty Days and forty Nights, an Expression often repeated in the *Old Testament* and the *New*, was the same

St. Luke^b says, the Child Jesus was not circumcised, 'till eight Days were accomplished; as strong an Expression, one would think, as eight Days and eight Nights; and yet the Birth might, according to the known Way of reckoning in this Case, be at the Close of the first, and the Circumcision at the Beginning of the last. Again; The Words *after three Days* are very full and expressive, and how are we to understand them? The chief Priests will inform us. *Sir, say they to Pilate, we remember that Deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three Days I will rise again;* and yet their Demand is that the Sepulchre be guarded only *till the third Day.* He has here the Authority of his own Friends, the chief Priests and *Pharisees*, that *after three Days, and till the third Day,* are equivalent Expressions, and were so used and so understood in the common Language of the Country. We have then the concurrent Evidence of the chief Priests and the Disciples, and that too in a Point, which neither of them could mistake; unless you can suppose them not to understand the Language of their own People. How the Expressions, *three Days and three Nights, after three Days, on the third Day*^c, are to be understood, Christ himself has

as forty Days; the first Day and the last being each reckoned as a complete νυκτίμερον, or Night and Day, though only a Portion of it.

^b Chap. ii. 21.

^c The Jews, 'tis plain, were not accurate to the Letter exactly

expressly shewn long enough before his Death and Resurrection : *I do Cures to day and to*

ter in their Reckoning of Time. I shall give the Reader one Instance amongst many to be found in the Scriptures. It is *2 Kings xviii. 9, 10. And it came to pass in the fourth Year of King Hezekiah (which was the seventh Year of Hosea Son of Elah King of Israel) that Salmaneser King of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it ; and at the End of three Years took it.* What can be stronger or more precise, than this appears to be? Would the Reader imagine it could mean any thing less than three Years complete? And yet it is certainly not so to be understood ; for after the Words *at the End of three Years*, it follows immediately, *even in the sixth Year of Hezekiah (that is, in the ninth Year of Hosea) Samaria was taken.* Now it is evident to sight, that if *at the End of three Years* was intended to signify three Years complete, *Hezekiah must have been in his seventh, and Hosea in his tenth Year, when Samaria was taken.*—After all, our Saviour himself is the best Interpreter of his own Language. In the many Predictions of his Resurrection the most usual Expression is *the third Day*, sometimes it is *after three Days*, and once *three Days and three Nights*, in which case the Expression seems to be varied for no other Reason than to accommodate it to the Language and Story of *Jonas*. Can it now be supposed, that speaking of the same Event, he does not mean the same Note of Time, though the Expression is a little varied? If then one of the Expressions happens to be clear, the natural and rational Way is to explain the rest by it. Now this Expression *the third Day* has nothing of Obscurity in it, and consequently will help us to understand the rest. I would fain know what view our Saviour could possibly have in applying these several Expressions to the same Event, as implying the same Note of Time? or what Interest the Apostles could have in publishing it to the World, had they not been the common Language of the Country, well known, and well understood by every one, as meaning one and the same thing? Such a Conduct

morrow, and the third Day I shall be perfected^a; exactly conformable to the Case of a Person taken ill one Day, being blooded the second, and dying the third, as stated in the Tryal^c.

Neither Jews nor Heathens of old ever objected, that the Resurrection fell out too soon for the Prediction; or that the Language of Scripture in this Point was not consistent. They knew very well it was the current Language of the Country, and the usual Method of Computation. The Honour of starting such Objections, is reserved for the wise Men of this Age; who, knowing little of ancient Usages and Customs, are perpetually from their own Mistakes raising Objections against the Gospel, and such as the ancient and more learned Infidels would have been ashamed of.

But the Considerer has another Difficulty yet behind, with regard to this History of Jonas. *The Prediction, he says, was not fulfilled, because the Sign promised to be given was not given to those it was promised to,* i. e. to the evil and adulterous Generation.

Where does the Considerer find the Promise he talks of? I can see no such Promise in the Words referred to. Christ tells them no Sign should be given, but that of the Prophet Jonas. What does he engage for here? that he would

would only have exposed both Master and Disciples to Scorn and Contempt. See Bishop Pearson's *Exposition of the Creed*, and Bishop Kidder's *Demonstration of the Messiah*, upon this Article.

^a Luke xiii. 35.

^c Page 48.

appear to them in Person after the Resurrection? There is not a Word about it. The Promise, if you will have it a Promise, was only that he would lie three Days in the Sepulchre. If this was not a Sign to the Jews, nothing could be a Sign to them, for they had the Evidence of their own Eyes, and of their own Guards.

But this Part of the Gospel-History, the Considerer will not admit; and he thinks himself able to prove the whole a Forgery. Let him speak his own Sense of this Matter; *That the Priests and Pharisees set no Watch, and that even the Disciples themselves were not forewarned of their Master's rising again, will more fully appear by the Facts which the Evangelists themselves relate^d.*

Let us now attend to the Reasons, that are to support this bold Undertaking. He first gives St. John's Account of the Care taken of the Body by Nicodemus; who, together with Joseph, took the Body of Jesus and wound it in linen Cloths with the Spices, and laid it in the Sepulchre^e.

Upon these Facts the Considerer argues thus. He supposes, and very justly, that when the chief Priests placed a Guard on the Sepulchre, they took Care to see that the Body was there; and then says, *If they saw the Body, they must needs see how it was spiced, or preserved for keeping, if it was done; they could not see one without the other^f.* It is to little Purpose to

^d First Edit. p. 34. Third Edit. p. 25. ^e Ib. ^f Ib. dispute

dispute these Circumstances ; it is sufficient to shew, that his Observation is not supported by the Text he pretends to build on. St. John says, the Body with the Spices *was wound up in linen Cloths* ; and without Doubt the Spices lay next the Body, and were covered by the linen Cloth ; and the Corpse bound in linen might be seen, without seeing the Spices. Suppose, however, that they saw the Spices, and how the Body was preserved for keeping ; why then he says, *Would they not then, being Witnesses of that, have taken the Soldiers back, resting contented that his Disciples knew nothing of any Prophecy of his rising again ; and therefore could have no Design under that Pretence to steal away the Body, and report he was risen ?*

It is hard to make out the Sense of this Reasoning ; but if it has any, it stands upon these very absurd Suppositions, 1. That had the Disciples expected a Resurrection, they would not have buried the Body, according to the Custom of the Country, with Spices, but would have saved that Expence as being unnecessary. 2. That this was a sufficient Ground for the chief Priests to conclude, that the Disciples expected no Resurrection. 3. That they were governed in this Affair merely by what they knew or believed of the Sentiments of the Disciples. As to the first of these Suppositions, the spicing or not spicing the Body could have no Influence on the Resurrection ; and therefore the Disciples could not be determined

mined to add or omit Spices, by their believing or not believing the Resurrection. Had they expected fully that *Jesus* would rise, would that have prevented their shewing the common Respect to their Master, which all the Country did to their dead Friends ? or could the Charge of Spices enter into the Consideration of this Matter ? 2. If there is no Shew of Probability, in supposing the Disciples to be influenced in adding or omitting Spices, by their Expectation of a Resurrection, there could be no Ground to conclude from their spicing the Body, that they did not expect a Resurrection. 3. There is not the least Intimation in the Gospel, that the chief Priests knew the Opinion of the Disciples in this Case, or that they would have considered it as of any Weight or Moment at all. They had heard of our Lord's Prophecy, that he would rise again, and it filled them with great Anxiety ; for to his great Power and wonderful Works they had been Witnesses. As to the Disciples, they had them in Contempt ; and though, in order to frame a plausible Pretence to *Pilate* for having a Watch for the Sepulchre, they tell him of their Apprehensions that the Disciples might steal the Body ; yet there is no Probability that this Pretence was the true and only Ground for their Fear. You see now how his first Demonstration against the Gospel History comes out.

His second is from the Behaviour of *Mary Magda-*

Magdalene and the other Women. He says, *They knew to be sure that Nicodemus had laid the Body in Spices*; and yet *Luke* and *Mark* say they brought Spices early in the Morning, when the Sabbath was past, to anoint the Body. And if this was the Case, says he, *what need had it of more?* and so infers that *St. John's Account of Spices used by Nicodemus*, and *St. Mark's* and *St. Luke's* of the Women bringing Spices afterwards, cannot be reconciled ^s.

As the *Considerer* pretends here to argue from Facts related by the Evangelists, I would ask him, Whence he had the Fact upon which all this Reasoning depends? The Evangelists give him no such Information. Nay, their Account is inconsistent with it; for the Women were not present when *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* bound up the Body with Spices; nor does it appear that they saw the Body after it was bound up; if they did, they could not see the Spices which were hid by the linen Winding-sheet. *St. Matthew* says, the Women *sat over against the Sepulchre*; *St. Mark*, that they *beheld where the Body was laid*. Had they been concerned in preparing the Body for Burial, would the Evangelists have separated their Case from that of *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* so remarkably? Would they have ascribed the whole Care of the Body and the Funeral to the Men only, and said no more of the Women, than that

^s First Edit. p. 35. Third Edit. p. 26.

they saw where the Body was laid ? These Accounts plainly suppose that the Women were without watching, while the Body was preparing, and that when it was carried out to be buried, they went after to observe the Place where it was laid. St. Luke's Account is more expressly so. His Words are, *The Women followed after, and beheld the Sepulchre, and how the Body was laid.* It is not, as at v. 49. of the same Chapter, *συνακολούθησασαι*, they went in Company with *Joseph*; but *κατακολούθησασαι*, they followed after him. The Evangelist adds, *έθεάσαντο τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ ὡς ἐτέθη τὸ σῶμα.* *ὡς* does not signify, as the Considerer understands it, *quo modo* but *quod*; and the Passage is not to be rendered *quo modo positum est*, but *quod positum*, or *sepultum^h est corpus*, i. e. they came to the Sepulchre, and saw that the Body was buried.

But allowing for once, that the Women knew what had already been done to the Body, what then ? They could not but know that all was done in great haste, in a tumultuary Manner. And will the Considerer pretend to say, that as much had been done by *Joseph* and *Nicodemus*, as was usual or necessary to be done ? and that the whole Ceremony was already compleated ? This is more than appears from the Evangelists, and much more than in the Nature of the Thing is possible to be true.

^h Instances in the *New Testament* are frequent, where *τίθημι* is used in this Sense.

No Nation was more careful of their Dead than the *Jews*. The Body was first to be washed all over and cleaned with much Care, and afterwards to be anointed. But in regard to *Christ's* Body, there was not Time before the Sabbath to perform even thus much of the Ceremony. When it was taken down from the Cross, the Evening was coming on; and it was not yet dark, when it was left in the Sepulchre ^a.

The Funeral Ceremony, 'tis plain, was not, nor could already be compleated. Offices of this solemn Kind, especially for Persons of Character and Distinction, were not used to be performed the Moment they were dead, nor to be huddled up in so hasty and negligent a Manner. *Moses* informs us that, when *Jacob* was embalmed, no less than forty Days were employed in the Operation ^b. And *Herodotus* (whose Authority perhaps the Philosopher may like better) tells us, that amongst the *Egyptians*, from whom the *Jews* borrowed that Practice, no less than seventy Days were required to compleat it ^c.

Joseph and *Nicodemus* intended, no doubt, to interr the Body of *Christ*, in a Manner agreeable to the Notion they had of his Dignity and Character. No less than an hundred Pound Weight of Spices and Perfumes were

^a Compare Matt. xxvii. 57. with Luke xxiii. 54.
^b Gen. l. 3. ^c Herod. lib. ii.

procured for this Purpose; not wholly to be employed in preparing the Body, as the *Considerer* seems to imagine, but to be burnt both before and after it was laid in the Sepulchre, and to be spent in a Manner well known to those, who are at all acquainted with Antiquity. The Sepulchre in which the Body was laid, was probably not that in which it was to be finally deposited. It was wrapped up with some of the Spices, and laid there for present Convenience only^d, because it happened to be near the Place of Crucifixion; and because the Sabbath was so near, that it was impossible to carry it further. The Funeral Ceremonies were reserved to be performed after the Sabbath, had not Providence prevented it by a more wonderful Event.

Whether the Women were acquainted with the little that had already been done to the Body is indeed nothing to the Purpose. They knew where it had been deposited, and they knew probably that it was afterwards to be removed. They came therefore early in the Morning to pay their last Respects to it, by anointing and perfuming it; a common Method of shewing Respect to Persons of Dignity and Distinction both living and dead^e.

What possible Foundation then is there for the *Considerer's* absurd Suggestions? "That
" there is no Dependance on Gospel History;

* John xix. 41.

^a Ib. xii. 3.

" that the Evangelists contradict one another
 " in this Point; that the Women had seen
 " the Body laid in Spices, and that there was no
 " Occasion for more." Instead of convicting
 the Evangelists of contradicting one another,
 he has only betrayed his own extreme Ignor-
 ance in Scripture and Antiquity; and that too
 in a Case so common and obvious, that a
 Man must take some Pains to mistake it.

His next Demonstration against St. Matthew's Account of guarding the Sepulchre, is from these Words of the Women, *Who shall roll away the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre?* Which, he observes, they would not have said, if they had known it was sealed^g, and a Guard placed. And he thinks if there was indeed a Watch, it is impossible the Women should be ignorant of it. I have considered the Account given by the Evangelists, and cannot see the least Foundation for these Imaginations. The Body was laid in the Sepulchre in the Evening of *Friday*; the Women went from thence and bought Spices, and on the Sabbath (or *Saturday*) they rested without stirring from home^h. On the Sabbath (while the Women were confined at home) the Guards were placed. Early the next Morning the Women go directly from home to the Sepulchre, expecting to find it as they left it,

^f Mark xvi. 3. ^g First Edit. p. 36. ^h Third Edit. p. 27.
^j Luke xxiii. 56.

with a Stone at the Mouth, too large and heavy for them to move; and therefore they say, *Who shall roll away the Stone?* The Considerer says, *If these Things (i. e. placing a Guard, &c.) had been done, how is it possible but they must have known them?* I cannot apprehend how it was possible they should know them. I suppose he does not imagine that either the *Roman Governor*, or the chief Priests thought it necessary to inform these poor Women, what they were doing. But he thinks *so public an Action* must needs come to their Knowledge. Who should carry it to them? It was the Sabbath Day, when others, as well as they, staid at home; for which Reason it is very probable, that this Action was not publicly known on that Day.

The Considerer goes on; *besides, nothing could be hid from the Disciples;* St. Matthew knew what the chief Priests and Rulers said in their Privy Councilⁱ. How does this appear? Why St. Matthew ten or more Years afterwards, when the Secret was divulged, relates what the chief Priests did in Council; and from thence he infers, that St. Matthew knew every thing done in Council, at the Time of doing it. I am quite ashamed to spend my own and Reader's Time thus impertinently.

But why do these Evangelists tell different Stories^j? What does the Considerer mean?

ⁱ First Edit. p. 36. Third Edit. p. 27.

^k Ibid.

St. *Matthew* alone tells the Story of guarding the Sepulchre. The rest are quite silent in that Point, but say nothing that is inconsistent with it. How then do they differ? Is it not the most usual thing in the World, for Historians in reporting the same Fact, to relate some of them more, and some fewer Circumstances, that attended it? And did ever any Man of common Sense charge them with Inconsistency on that Account? Suppose that in telling the Story of *Edward II.* one Historian should conclude with saying that he resigned the Crown; and another should be more particular, and give an Account of a Deputation sent to him in form to take his Resignation; would the *Considerer* question the Truth of the principal Fact, that he resigned the Crown? The Case is the same here. The principal Facts, the Death, the Burial, the Resurrection of *Christ* are attested by all the Evangelists. In the Circumstances of the History some relate more, some fewer; does this invalidate their Testimony in reporting the principal Facts, in which they entirely agree?

The Account given by St. *Matthew*, of guarding and sealing the Sepulchre, is a very material Circumstance, and was particularly so to the *Jews*; who had by this means of their own Contrivance, the most evident Demonstration of the only Sign intended them, the Sign of the Prophet *Jonas*. Our Lord told them, that they should have this Sign, and should

should know that the Son of Man was three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth. Had they been contented with seeing him crucified and buried, and concerned themselves no farther, I know not how they would have had the Evidence of his being three Days in the Earth. But by the secret working of Providence, they themselves furnish out the Evidence. They guard the Sepulchre, and their own Guards report, that it was by irresistible Power from above opened, and the Prisoner released, on the third Day.

St. *Matthew*, by the concurrent Testimony of all Antiquity, wrote his Gospel for the Use of the *Hebrews* particularly ; and this Story of guarding the Sepulchre, being an Evidence of the Completion of a Prophecy, given to that Nation in particular, seems to be the Reason why he relates it so punctually. Whoever will read St. *Matthew's* Gospel, and compare it attentively with other Gospels, will see so many internal Marks to confirm the Report of Antiquity, that he will have little Reason to doubt it. And since one Evangelist only has mentioned this Circumstance of guarding the Sepulchre, how providential was it, that we have the Account in that Gospel, which was written for the *Jews* particularly ? When this Gospel was published, there were Thousands living in that Country, who knew and could inform others of the Circumstances reported by St. *Matthew*.

And

And is it credible that St. *Matthew* would have published this Account in *Judæa* itself, where, if false, it must undoubtedly have been detected. If this Story had appeared first in an History published among the Heathens, at a great Distance from *Judæa*, the Infidels would have triumphed and told us, that the Historian took the Advantage of telling the People a strange Story, but took Care to lay the Scene of it at a Place, where it was not likely they should send to make Enquiries. We should then have been asked, why the Story was not told in the Gospel intended for the Use of the *Jews* particularly, who had proper means to examine the Truth of it. Well then; the Story happily was published in *Judæa* itself, and being found in St. *Matthew*'s Gospel, is an Appeal to the whole Nation of the *Jews* for the Truth of the Fact, and probably made whilst many were living, who were concerned in the Transaction.

That St. *Matthew* reports this Story, and the other Evangelists omit it, is not a singular Case: St. *Matthew*'s View in writing for the *Jews*, shows itself in other like Instances. The Massacre of the Infants by *Herod* is reported by St. *Matthew* only, and for the same Reason; because it was a Fact of peculiar Moment to the *Jews*, as it shewed the Sense of the Nation in expecting the Messiah at the very Time when *Christ* was born, as it was the Completion of a Prophecy set forth in their own Scriptures

tures, and as it was a Fact that happened at their own Door, in which they could not be imposed on.

For a like Reason St. *Matthew* quotes many Prophecies, and applies them to the Messias in a way well known and understood by the *Jews*, but in a way unknown to the *Gentiles*, and therefore they appear not in the other Gospels.

So again the Genealogies of *Christ* in St. *Luke* and St. *Matthew* appear at first Sight to be very different, but are entirely reconcileable by considering for whose use the two Gospels were intended : St. *Matthew*'s for the *Jews*; St. *Luke*'s for the *Gentiles*. There were two ways of reckoning Descents among the *Jews*, one of them common to them and other Nations, by the Course of Descent from Father to Son ; the other was by the legal Descent, established in their Law ; according to which, if an elder Brother dyed without Issue, and left a Widow, the next Brother was to take her to Wife ; and their first born Son was in Law the Son of the eldest Brother, and succeeded to his Estate. It is manifest that these Genealogies must meet in the common Ancestor, for Brothers Children have the same Grandfather. Now St. *Luke* writing to the *Gentiles*, deduces the Genealogy of *Christ* in the way understood by them, *secundum jus sanguinis*. St. *Matthew* writing to the *Jews*, follows the Method by which the Right of Succession was governed

among the *Jews*, and draws out the Genealogy according to the legal Descent. These Instances, and many others that might be given, shew how little Weight there is in objecting against a Piece of History, because it appears but in one, or sometimes but in two of the four Evangelists.

At Page 28, &c. of the third Edit. and 37, &c. of the first, the *Considerer* spends a great deal of Paper and Pains, to confute some Imaginations, in which no body is concerned but himself. He takes it for granted that the *Jews*, to account for their guarding the Sepulchre, must act upon one or other of these Persuasions ; they must either be fully satisfied that *Christ* would rise again ; and then he says, it was to no Purpose to guard the Sepulchre in order to prevent it : or they must be fully satisfied that he would not rise again ; and then there was no Reason, he says, to be apprehensive of a fraudulent Resurrection. It is hardly possible that either of these should be their real Case. They were anxious and solicitous about this Event ; alarmed and confounded with recollecting his Miracles, and the Prophecies of his rising from the Dead ; unable to satisfy their own Doubts, or to calm the Misgivings of their own Minds. Sometimes they imagined that possibly he might rise ; sometimes perhaps that the Disciples might secrete the Body, and tell the People strange Stories. How to extricate themselves they knew

knew not ; and therefore they apply to *Pilate* for a Guard, in hopes of finding some Relief in their Distress, as Men in Distress are ready to take any thing for a Remedy. But that they had as much Leisure, and as much cool Infidelity, as the *Considerer* had, when he argued their Cause for them, is utterly incredible ; and were they to give an Account for themselves, they would hardly plead their own Cause, as this wise Advocate, without attending to the Situation they were in, has done for them.

The Conduct of the *Jewish* Rulers, with regard to our Saviour, was the more likely to be wrong, because they judged and acted upon wrong Maxims. They were so possessed with the Expectation of a *Messiah* with temporal Power, that no Reason could persuade them that *Christ* was the Person, who pretended to no such Power ; and upon this Notion they were so resolutely determined to oppose his Pretensions, that no Evidence could convince them, that his Claims were just. The People however were not so insensible as their Leaders ; convinced by his Wonders, and engaged by the many Acts of Benevolence he daily did, they followed him in great Numbers. The Governours concerned and enraged to see the People thus deluded, as they called it, by a Pretender, determined to put an End to his Pretensions, by putting an End to his Life. Accordingly they had him apprehended, accu-

sed of Blasphemy against God, and Treason against *Cæsar*, and publickly executed. But the Danger was not yet over. He prophesied in his Life-time, that he should rise again in three Days, and we have shewn before, that they had now Reason to be alarmed at this Prophecy. The Works done in his Life, compared with the amazing Scene that was opened at his Death, must needs fill them with Doubts and Fears. They could not tell but some extraordinary Power might possibly exert itself in Behalf of one, at whose Agonies all Nature seemed to sympathize: Or if after all he should prove to be an Impostor, they imagined, or pretended to imagine, that the Disciples might take Advantage of this Situation of Things, and contrive to carry on the Cheat; that they might possibly remove the Body out of Sight, and give out that the Prophecy was fulfilled. Thus the Delusions of the People, though checked awhile by his Death, might break out afresh, and become more rivetted and confirmed by a supposed Resurrection; and so the last Error be worse than the first. To quiet their own Minds therefore, and to be fully satisfied about the Event, a Guard of Soldiers is placed at the Sepulchre. But on the third Day they are frighted from their Post by an Angel and an Earthquake, fly into the City, and make their Report to the chief Priests. The chief Priests well knew what Effect this Report would naturally have on the
Minds

Minds of the People, if fairly made ; to prevent which they resolve in the first Place to publish a Story of their own ; and therefore, with a rich Bribe in hand, and a full Assurance of Indemnity, they prevail with the Watch to be silent as to what they had seen at the Sepulchre, and to give out that the Disciples stole away the Body, whilst they were asleep.

But to justify the Credit of this Piece of History, we must, it seems, answer all the Imaginations of the *Considerer* ; who has given his Judgment upon the Part acted by the Guards and the chief Priests, and is of Opinion that neither of them could do what the History ascribes to them. He has summed up his Reasoning at Page 48. first Edit. and Page 38. third Edit. It is amazing--that *the Guard at the Sepulchre should be terrified almost to Death, with astonishing Wonders, and the high Priests and Rulers believe them, yet these Things should have no more Effect upon them than if they had not believed them^a.*

Little Dealers in History and Politicks are never more contemptible, than when they attempt to assign Reasons for or against plain Facts, reported by Writers of Credit. The Actions of a great General have been sometimes called in question, because a little Smatterer in military Affairs conceives the Schemes not to have been well laid, or not well conducted ;

^a First Edit. p. 48. Third Edit. p. 38.

and then full of his own Wisdom he says, Could any great General act so? Upon the Strength of which Reasoning he concludes the History to be false. There are two small Faults in this Way of arguing, first, that he who reasons so, takes it for granted that he is able to judge wisely in the Case himself, which often happens to be otherwise. Secondly, that Men in all Cases act wisely and reasonably, which seldom is the Case.

But let us hear in the first Place what the Considerer has to say for the Guards.

'Tis strange, unaccountably strange! that those Soldiers, who were just now almost struck dead with Terror, should lose the Impressions so easily and so soon, which it had made upon them, which just before scarce left them Power to fly from the deadly Fright which an Earthquake and an Angel had put them in! — that for Money they should all agree together to list themselves in the Priests Service to fight against God, when by so doing they might expect some heavy Judgment to fall upon them; but by affirming the Truth boldly, conceive reasonable Hopes of being Captains in the Messiah's victorious Army, which was to conquer all Nations^b.

Let us now consider the Grounds upon which he builds. He supposes these common Soldiers, who were Heathens, and bred up to despise the Religion of the Jews above all

^b First Edit. p. 44. Third Edit. p. 34.

others,

others, to be persuaded, that, when they took a Bribe of the chief Priests, *they listed themselves to fight against God*—and that they might expect some heavy Judgment, and that by acting otherwise, *they might have reasonable Hopes of being Captains in the Messiah's victorious Army*, which was to conquer all Nations. How comes the *Considerer* to furnish the Soldiers with these Sentiments? Does he imagine that a Fright would make them forget all the Religion of their own Country at once, and turn *Jews*, and firm Believers in the God of the *Jews*? and that it would give them the same Opinion of the *Messiah* which the *Jews* had; and make them think *Jesus* to be the *Messiah*, and fill them with Expectation of Employments under him? Nothing surely can be more out of Character. But however, they were terrified; and the *Considerer* thinks it strange, *they should lose the Impression so easily and so soon*. What Impression does he mean? If he means the Sentiments, which he has ascribed to them, I am persuaded they did not lose them, for they never had them. The *Roman* Soldiers very probably knew nothing more, than that they were appointed to watch the Sepulchre, that the Body might not be removed, and that they were acquainted with the Character and Pretensions of the Person lying in the Grave, there is not the least Reason to suspect; much less had they any Expectation of being disturbed by invisible Powers;

and

and when they were disturbed; what Probability is there in making them reason immediately like *Jews*, and to think of God and his *Messiah*, as if they had been his Disciples ? But suppose them (if you please) to have some Tincture of Religion ; suppose too they believed with the Centurion at the Crucifixion, that *Christ* was indeed a righteous Man ; and yet farther, that he was particularly favoured of the Gods ; what is all this to the Purpose ? If he was a Favourite of the Gods, it was the Gods of his own Country, with whom they imagined they had nothing to do. They had Gods of their own, to whom they were bound, and whom they served, if they served any Gods at all. As to the *Jewish Religion*, if they thought any thing of it, they thought with the rest of the Heathens that it was the worst of Superstitions. It remains then only that the Soldiers were scared and terrified by a surprizing Sight. And where is the Wonder, that, when the Fright was over, they should be what they were before, mere common Soldiers ; and ready to take Money, which was to be earned at so cheap a Rate, as reporting a Story made for them by the chief Priests ? It was all one to them who moved the Body ; they were unaffected with the Consequences that alarmed the chief Priests ; and, I dare say, ready Money outweighed all Hopes, the *Considerer* has given them, of getting Commissions under the *Jewish Messiah*.

In the next Place he undertakes the Cause of the chief Priests, and to prove that the Part assigned to them in the Gospel History, is a weak one, and a wicked one ; and thence he concludes they neither did nor could act that Part, and that the Account of it is forged. The first Part of his Task is indeed an easy one ; for the chief Priests acted very foolishly and very wickedly ; but I am in some Pain for his Consequence. Will he maintain that no Men act wickedly or weakly ? or though many do, yet the chief Priests never did or could ? I doubt he will be at a full Stop here. But let us hear him. *The Priests, he says, as well as the People, were credulous of Miracles, being nursed up in the Belief of them, which when attested by their own Party, Persons whose Veracity they could depend upon (not the flying Reports of a giddy Mob) must have prevented them from doing what 'tis here pretended they did.*

But why should the chief Priests be more affected by Miracles, *attested by their own Party, i. e. the Guards, than by those which they saw themselves ?* Many such there were, some of them I have already mentioned ; but how were they affected by them ? Did they not seek the Life of Jesus for raising Lazarus, and the Life of Lazarus that he might not live a Witness of the Power of Jesus ? Did they not admit the Miracles, and yet ascribe them to the Power of Beelzebub ? And might they not with

^c First Edit. p. 45. Third Edit. p. 35.

the same Reason ascribe all the Guards reported to be done at the Sepulchre to the same Power ?

If it be sufficient to set aside the Authority of the Gospel, because it represents the chief Priests acting unreasonably, the same Argument will be too hard for the Credit of all the Histories in Being ; for they all show us Men acting with great Folly and great Wickedness. The *Old Testament* must doubtless follow the *New* ; for what is more unreasonable than the Behaviour of the ancient *Jews*, after their wonderful Deliverance from *Egypt* ? May not the *Considerer* say, Had God so visibly interposed for their Deliverance, it is impossible they should rebel so soon as the History says they did ; and therefore the History must be false ? But I leave this to consider a Complaint of a much higher Nature.

The *Angel*, it seems, who was the Minister of God, and acted as by him directed, did *very impolitickly* in frightening away the *Watch*, before *Jesus* came out of the *Sepulchre*, so that they could not be *Witnesses* of his *Resurrection*^d. How he knows that the *Watch* was terrified before *Jesus* came out of the *Sepulchre*, I cannot tell ; he learns it not from the *Gospel*. The *Angel* mov'd the Stone for the Sake of those who came to the *Sepulchre*, that they might see, and report what they saw ; our Lord certainly wanted not their Help. But why were the *Angels* *impolitic* ?

* First Edit. p. 47. Third Edit. p. 38.

were they to govern themselves by the Politics of the Chief Priests, and follow their Measures? Had God, or the Angels by his Direction appointed the Watch to be Witnesses of the Resurrection, and they had been scared away before the Time, the Objection would have laid: But how was God bound to give this Evidence to the Guards? Was it because the Chief Priests had set the Watch? But what Right had they to prescribe to God, who should be Eye-Witnesses of his Son's Resurrection? The setting of the Watch and what followed was sufficient to convince the Jews, that Jesus, according to his own Prophecy, was three Days in the Heart of the Earth, and then released. This Evidence rose providentially out of their own Contrivance, to watch the Body; but their Contrivance laid no Obligation on God, nor could it hasten or retard the Resurrection, or have any Effect on the Manner of it. We find in the Gospel, that very particular Care was taken by our Lord, to appoint chosen Witnesses of the Resurrection. To them he shewed himself alive, after the Resurrection; to them were given Powers from on high to confirm this Evidence; but where does the Considerer read, that it was referred to the High Priests, or that they had any Right to appoint Witnesses in this Case? If they had no Right to appoint them, no Injury was done in not admitting them. And yet after all, though the Considerer thinks the Guards did not see enough, they saw so much as to make their Report of great Weight, had there not been an

incorrigible Obstinacy in the Jewish Rulers; enough to awaken their Attention, and to call to their Remembrance the Sign of Jonas, which was to be given them; enough to raise serious Reflections upon all the Miracles of Jesus, of which they had themselves been Eye-Witnesses.

III.

We come now to consider the Inconsistencies, which the *Considerer* charges upon the Evangelists in the Account they give of the Circumstances of the Resurrection. One would imagine this Gentleman had never read any Piece of History reported by different Writers; or any *Tryal*, whose Facts are proved by many Witnesses; otherwise he would not have objected to the Relations of the Evangelists, merely because some mention Circumstances omitted by others, though all agree in the principal Facts to be proved; and all the Circumstances, though all not mentioned by each Writer, are perfectly consistent. For this is the Case of all Historians, who treat of the same Facts; and I am persuaded, that, had the Gospel Accounts with all their Varieties related to any Matter of civil History, and been published under the Name of any *Grecian* or *Roman* Historians, these different Relations, instead of being thought Matter of Objection, would have been considered as confirming and establishing each the other. Such Differences among Reporters of the same Fact, will always be found from the very Nature of Things. For all Facts being

ing attended with many Circumstances, and all of them not of equal Importance, Historians, according to their different Judgments, choose to report some more, some fewer of those Circumstances. This, I say, must be the common Case, where Historians write without Regard to each other ; but it must necessarily be so, where a later Historian publishes an Account on Purpose to supply the Defects or Omissions of those before him ; for then his very Design is to add such Things or Circumstances, as the others had either totally neglected or imperfectly related.

The Four Gospels were not published at the same Time, nor can the precise Date of the Publication of each of them be ascertained. St. *Matthew* by the general Consent of Antiquity is taken to be first, and to have been published not many Years after our Saviour's Crucifixion, St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* came next in Order. After all, and long after all came St. *John's* Gospel, publish'd in an extreme old Age, and not above a Year before his Death. His Intention was, as all Antiquity bears Witness, to compleat the History of our Saviour, by adding what the other Evangelists had omitted, and enlarging what they had concisely related.

This being the State of the History, as contained in the Four Gospels ; the true Way of examining it is, to consider the Accounts given by the three first Evangelists separately (as being the Accounts which lay before St. *John*, when he wrote his Gospel) and then to compare

pare them with St. John. By which means we shall see, what he left as he found it, and as wanting no Addition or Explanation ; and also what Additions or Explanations he thought proper to insert ; and so be able to judge upon the whole, whether the History be consistent with itself.

In order

St. Matt. Chap. xxviii.

1. In the End of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first Day of the Week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the Sepulchre.

2. And behold there was a great Earthquake; for the Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the Stone from the Door, and sat upon it.

3. His Countenance was like Lightening, and his Raiment white as Snow.

4. And for fear of him the Keepers did shake, and became as dead Men.

5. And the Angel answered and said unto the Women, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6. He is not here : For he is risen as he said :

St. Mark, Chap. xvi.

1. And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James and Salome, had brought Spices that they might come, and anoint him.

2. And very early in the Morning the first Day of the Week, they came to the Sepulchre, at the rising of the Sun.

3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre ?

4. And when they looked, they saw that the Stone was rolled away, for it was very great.

5. And entring into the Sepulchre, they saw a young Man sitting on the right Side, clothed in a long white Garment, and they were affrighted.

In order to give the Reader the Light, which I think will arise from this Method, I will lay before him the Account of the three Evangelists of what passed at the Sepuchre ; and then consider what the Difference between them is ; and lastly compare them with St. John's Account, and consider how the Difference will then stand, upon the Foot of the Additions or Explications given by him.

St. Luke, Chap. xxiv.

1. Now upon the first Day of the Week, very early in the Morning, they came unto the Sepulchre, bringing the Spices, which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

2. And they found the Stone rolled away from the Sepulchre.

3. And they entered in, and found not the Body of the Lord Jesus.

4. And it came to pass as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two Men stood by them in shining Garments.

5. And as they were afraid, and bowed down their Faces to the Earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the Living among the Dead ?

St. Matt. Chap. xxviii.

St. Mark, Chap. xvi.

Come see the Place where
the Lord lay.

7. And go quick, and tell his Disciples, that he is risen from the Dead ; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him ; lo, I have told you.

8. And they departed quickly from the Sepulchre, with Fear and great Joy, and did run to bring his Disciples Word.

9. And as they went to tell his Disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All Hail ; and they came and held him by the Feet, and worshipped him.

10. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid : go tell my Brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted : ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified ; he is not here ; behold the Place where they laid him.

7. But go your Way, tell his Disciples and Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee : There shall ye see him as he said unto you.

8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the Sepulchre : For they trembled and were amazed : Neither said they any thing to any Man : For they were afraid.

9. Now when Jesus was risen early the first Day of the Week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven Devils :

10. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

11. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

St.

St. Luke, Chap. xxiv.

6. He is not here, but
is risen: Remember how
he spake unto you, when
he was yet in Galilee,

7. Saying, The Son of
Man must be delivered in-
to the Hands of sinful
Men, and be crucified,
and the third Day rise
again.

8. And they remember-
ed his Words,

9. And returned from
the Sepulchre, and told all
these things to the Eleven;
and all the rest.

10. It was Mary Mag-
dalene and Joanna, and
Mary the Mother of
James, and other Women
that were with them,
which told these things
unto the Apostles.

11. And their Words
seemed to them as idle
Tales, and they believed
them not.

12. Then arose Peter,
and ran unto the Sepul-
chre, and stooping down,
he beheld the Linen Cloths
laid by themselves, and
departed, wondering in
himself at that which was
come to pass.

You see St. *Matthew* is the only one, who mentions the Earthquake, and the Angels descending to roll away the Stone. As the rest say nothing of it, it is very absurd to say, as the *Con-fiderer* does, that they contradict it. I shall only therefore observe upon this Part, that our *English* Translation is not exact ; for after relating the coming of the Women to the Sepulchre, it follows, *and behold there was a great Earthquake*, &c. which may lead the Reader to imagine, that the Earthquake happened, whilst the Women were at the Sepulchre ; which it did not. St. *Matthew* was to account for the Womens finding the Stone rolled, and therefore inserts what happened just before their coming ; and his Words should be render'd, *and behold there had been an Earthquake*, &c.

If you compare these three Evangelists together in other Respects, the Difference between them will lye in these Particulars.

1. St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* say, the Women came early to the Sepulchre, bringing Spices to anoint the Body ; St. *Matthew* says they came early to the Sepulchre, but says nothing of their bringing Spices.

2. St. *Matthew* says, the two *Marys* came to the Sepulchre ; St. *Mark*, the two *Marys* and *Salome* ; St. *Luke* says, the Women who came from *Galilee* with him, and he tells us, v. 11. that they were the two *Marys*, *Joanna*, and other Women with them.

3. The

3. The three Evangelists agree that the Women saw a Vision ; St. Matthew says, an *Angel* ; St. Mark, a *young Man* ; St. Luke, two Men, whom § 23. he calls two Angels.

4. St. Matthew and St. Mark agree in the Message sent by the Angels to the Disciples, that he would go before them into *Galilee*. St. Luke does not mention this Message expressly, but that the Angels remind the Women of what Jesus had said, being with them in *Galilee*, of his Death and Resurrection.

These Differences cannot be accounted for by any Thing added in the Gospel of St. John; and therefore I shall postpone the Consideration of them, for the Sake of pursuing the View before me.

The next and most material Difference occurs in the Account given of our Lord's appearing to *Mary Magdalene*. St. Matthew says, that as the Women went from the Sepulchre to carry the Message to the Disciples, Jesus met them, and gave them another Message to the Disciples. St. Mark, after concluding the Account of what passed at the Sepulchre says, *Now when Jesus was risen early the first Day of the Week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene*. He does not mention this as Part of what happened at the Sepulchre, but as a new and distinct Account of itself. St. Luke gives no Account of our Lord's appearing to *Mary*.

These Accounts considered together, the Case will stand thus. Stop at St. Matthew's Account

of what passed at the Sepulchre, to the Women's going with the Angels Message to the Disciples, which ends with v^y 8. and take St. *Mark*'s Account without tacking to it the separate Relation of the Appearance to *Mary Magdalene*, (which is indeed no Part of the Account as given by St. *Mark* of what happened at the Sepulchre) and then the three Accounts are (excepting the small Variations before mention'd, and hereafter to be accounted for) perfectly consistent.

The Difficulty then remaining, is to account for St. *Luke*'s saying nothing of this Appearance; for St. *Mark*'s speaking of it as distinct from what happened at the Sepulchre; for St. *Matthew*'s placing it before he had accounted for the Delivery of the first Message, and adding a second Message of like Import from *Christ* himself.

The Difficulty with respect to St. *Luke* is not great; he has omitted the Appearance; for it came not within the Compass of what he propos'd to relate, as will appear presently. Neither are St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark*, who relate this Appearance, at Variance. They agree in the Appearance, agree that it was early on the first Day of the Week; St. *Matthew* says, it was as they went to tell the Disciples; and so it might be consistently with St. *Mark*, for he has said nothing to the contrary. Thus the Case would stand, had we only the History as given by these three Evangelists.

When St. *John* wrote his Gospel, he had Reason to enlarge the Account given of what passed at the Sepulchre, for the sake of adding his own Testimony, who had been himself an Eye-Witness ; which Testimony the other Evangelists had omitted. Compare St. *John* and St. *Luke* together, and St. *John* plainly carries on the Account, where St. *Luke* left it. St. *Luke* relates how the Women went to the Sepulchre, saw Angels, receiv'd a Message to the Disciples ; that they delivered the Message, and that *Peter* upon hearing it went away to the Sepulchre, and found every Thing to answer the Relation. Now St. *John* went and was a Witness of these Things as well as *Peter* ; he leaves therefore St. *Luke's* Account, (which was exact as to what happened before *Peter* went) as he found it ; and carries it on by beginning with a clear and distinct Account of his own going with *Peter* to the Sepulchre. To introduce this Account he says, *The first Day of the Week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the Sepulchre ; and seeth the Stone taken away from the Sepulchre. Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and the other Disciple whom Jesus loved,*^a &c. He then gives an Account of what he and St. *Peter* observed of the State of the Sepulchre. It appears at v. 11. that *Mary* returned to the Sepulchre, and staid there after him ; that she saw again a Vision of

^a John xx. 1, &c.

Angels,

Angels, and saw *Jesus* himself, who gave her a Message to deliver to the Disciples.

Let us see now how their Accounts will correspond together.

1. It is manifest that *Mary* went twice to the Sepulchre.

2. That St. *John* gives no other Account of what passed at her first being there, except that she found the Stone taken away from the Sepulchre, and this only as introductory to what he had to add further.

3. That the Story of her first going, and what related to it, ended at the Relation she made of what she had seen, to *Peter* and *John*.

4. That the Appearance of *Jesus* to her, and the Message given to her, was at her second being at the Sepulchre.

It comes out from these Lights given by St. *John*,

1st. That St. *Luke's* Account related only to what happened at *Mary's* first going to the Sepulchre; for it ends at St. *Peter's* setting out to view the Sepulchre, where St. *John* begins.

2dly. Since St. *Luke's* Account agrees with St. *Matthew's* and St. *Mark's*, in relating what passed at the Sepulchre, it follows that their Accounts are Relations of what passed only at *Mary's* first coming, i. e. St. *Matthew's* Account to v. 8, inclusive, and St. *Mark's* to v. 8. inclusive.

3ly. St. *John* having informed us, that *Christ* appeared to *Mary*, and delivered his Message to her

her at her second coming to the Sepulchre ; it follows that what St. *Matthew* says ¶. 9, 10. and St. *Mark* ¶. 9, 10, 11. happened at her second coming to the Sepulchre.

Thus St. *John's* additional Account has given us a clear Order of the whole Transaction. And it appears that St. *Luke* considered the Women merely as Messengers of the News to the Disciples ; and as soon as the Message was delivered, and the Disciples made acquainted with it, he prosecutes their Story no further. St. *Mark* in like Manner, but adds the Appearance to *Mary*, as a distinct and separate thing by itself.

St. *Matthew* has given an Account of what happened at the first going to the Sepulchre ; and has also mentioned the Appearance to *Mary*, which he has connected to the former Account as Part (and so indeed it was) of the same Transaction. Had he mentioned this Appearance, as St. *Mark* has mentioned it, without making any Connection between the Appearance and the Story of the first Visit to the Sepulchre, there had been no Difficulty in this Part of the Case.

The Difficulty there now is, arises from the Manner in which St. *Matthew* connects these two Parts together ; he says, that *Jesus* appeared to the Women, *as they went to tell the Disciples* ; St. *John's* Account is, that he appeared to *Mary* after she had delivered the Message (not to the Disciples, but) to himself and

and *Peter*, and had returned a second Time to the Sepulchre.

I believe there are very few Histories in the World, where Difficulties of this Sort, were they nicely enquired into, do not frequently occur. Writers of History, to make one Thread of Story, lay hold of any Circumstances to make a Transition from one Fact to another.

A little Agreement of the Facts in Place or Time often serves ; and we read in or near the same Place, or about the same Time such and such Things happened ; in which Exactness is not intended or expected. And had we nothing else to say upon the present Difficulty, it would be sufficient with reasonable Men.

But as this seeming Disagreement has been so strongly insisted on, I desire the Reader to consider the following Observations.

i. St. Matthew's Account may very well consist with St. John's. St. Matthew does not say, the Women had delivered no Message to the Disciples, nor does St. John say they had delivered it to any but to himself and *Peter*. Consider then ; the Women, who received the Message from the Angel at their first going to the Sepulchre, could not deliver it to the Disciples all at once ; for it is not to be supposed that they were all together so early in the Morning : For which Reason, the Women probably divided themselves, and some went to some of the Disciples, and some to others ; and that *Mary Magdalene*, and whoever else attended her,

her, went, in the first Place, to *Peter* and *John* to inform them, intending to go to others with like Notice. But when they found that *Peter* and *John* went directly to the Sepulchre, they did, as it was extremely natural for them to do, go after them, to see the Sepulchre, which they had left in Fear, but very desirous to view it again in Company of the Men, intending soon to return, and deliver the Message to the other Disciples. Upon this Case, it is evident, they returned to the Sepulchre before they had delivered their Message, as they were required to do, to the Disciples; and St. *Matthew* might very well consider the Appearance of *Jesus*, as happening whilst they were employed in carrying the first Message. And this accounts likewise for our Saviour's giving them a second Message, much to the same Purpose and Import as the first.

2. There is no Reason to think, that St. *Matthew*'s Words are to be taken so strictly, as to limit the Appearance of *Jesus* to the Women, to the very Moment in which they passed from the Sepulchre, with the first Message to the Disciples.

1. Because there could not, from the first going to the Sepulchre, to the End of the whole Account, including the Appearance to *Mary*, be more than an Hour at most employed; and Facts, crowded so close together, are scarcely ever reported under different Dates.

2. Because St. *Matthew*, throwing the whole Transaction into one continued Story, would naturally consider no more than the general Order in which Things happened, without distinguishing the short Time, which the whole took up, into different Periods.

3. Because the Language, used by St. *Matthew*, does really import no more than the general Order in which things happened: He says, *ὡς ἐπορεύοντο απαγέλλαι*, as they were going to tell. You have, at ver. 11. the very same way of speaking, *πορευομόντων ή αὐτῶν*. It is the very same Note of Time; for he speaks of the Women's going with the Message, and says, *Now when they (the Women) were going, behold the Watch came into the City, and shewed the Chief Priests all the Things that were done.* Can any one suppose, that the Evangelist means more, than that the Watch went to the City about the same Time that the Women went to the Disciples? Or if it could possibly appear, that the Watch were really a Quarter of an Hour sooner or later than the Women; would this, in the Opinion of any Man living, impeach the Credit of the Historian? If any Person desires more Instances of these Transitions, they occur frequently in St. *Matthew*, and in other Writers of the *New Testament*.

As to the Order in which we have placed the Transactions at the Sepulchre, by Comparison of the four *Evangelists* together; it is confirmed and established, beyond all Doubt, by the

the Account which the two Disciples, going to Emmaus, give our Saviour. This, say they, is the third Day since the Crucifixion; yea, and certain Women also of our Company made us astonished, which were early at the Sepulchre; and, when they found not his Body, they came, saying, that they had seen a Vision of Angels, which said, that he was alive. And certain of them that were with us, went to the Sepulchre, and found it even so as the Women had said; but him they saw not^a. Compare this with St. Luke's own Account, and St. John's, as far as it relates to what himself and Peter did at the Sepulchre, and you will find the Facts reported in the same Order. These two Disciples left Jerusalem as soon as Peter and John had made their Report, and before Mary Magdalene had reported the Appearance of Christ to her, or had delivered his Message to the Disciples: Which proves, that the Account, as it stands in St. Matthew, including the Appearance to Mary Magdalene, was not told to the Disciples at once, but must be accounted for in the manner above-mentioned. Otherwise these two Disciples must have known of the Appearance of Christ, as well as of the other Circumstances prior to it, which they so punctually relate.

You see here plainly, that the two Disciples, speaking of the first Visit the Women made to the Sepulchre, say, *they found not his Body*; and

^a Luke xxiv. 21, &c.

thence the *Considerer* infers, they never saw him; expressly contrary to the Account given by St. *John*, of their second Visit to the Sepulchre. And, for want of observing the Series of the Story, he goes on mistaking and confounding the Circumstances, which belong to the first and the second Visit to the Sepulchre; and triumphs in discovering Contradictions in the *Evangelists*; whereas, in Truth, the only thing he has discovered is, that he does not understand them.

In stating thus the Series and Order of what passed at the Sepulchre, there is one Difficulty only to be accounted for, viz. St. *John* speaks of the Appearance of *Jesus* to *Mary Magdalene* only; St. *Matthew* speaks of it as made to more than one; and St. *Mark* says, that *Jesus* appeared *first* to *Mary Magdalene*, which may be thought not to agree with St. *Matthew's* Account^b.

Now though St. *John* speaks only of *Mary Magdalene*, she being the principal Person; and it being not at all necessary to his purpose to mention more (for a Message delivered by her, accounts as well for his going to the Sepulchre, as if it had been delivered by twenty;) yet if you consider what *Mary Magdalene* says herself, it will appear, that she was not alone. Her Words are, *they have taken the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and WE know not*

^b *Resurrec^t. Consider.* First Ed. p. 50. Third Ed. p. 34.
where

where they have laid him. WE imports that she had others with her at delivering this Message; and, if she had, it cannot be supposed, that they left her to go alone to the Sepulchre, when she followed *Peter* and *John*; or permitted her to stay behind them alone at the Sepulchre. Consequently the Appearance was to *Mary Magdalene* when others were with her, though she only is mentioned by St. *John* throughout his Account.

As to St. *Mark*, he says, *Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene*. His Meaning is, that the *first* Appearance he made was to her; but that it was to *her only*, he does not say. And it is manifest, that the Word *first* (*πρῶτον*) relates to the Order of Appearances; for it follows, ver. 12. *after that* he appeared in another Form to two of them, and, ver. 14. *afterward* he appeared unto the Eleven. The first Appearance then was certainly to *Mary Magdalene*; but whether to her alone, depends upon a careful Comparison of the *Evangelists* together. And, upon the whole, I think the Account here given seems to me to be the most probable; which I would be understood to say, without Prejudice to other Interpretations, which many worthy and learned Writers have followed.

But let us now look back to the Variations between the three *first Evangelists*, which we passed over before.

1. The first is, that St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* say, *the Women came early to the Sepulchre bringing Spices*; St. *Matthew* says nothing of their bringing Spices.

It gives Light to any Piece of History, to shew the Motives of the principal Actions recorded. But where the Fact itself is the only material thing, such Circumstances may, or may not be added, as the Historian pleases. In the present Case the Fact itself, that *the Women were early at the Sepulchre, saw the Stone rolled away, and the Body not there*, are the only material things in the Narration. And whether they came early to the Sepulchre, for one Reason or for another, is of little Consequence; and is in the Discretion of the Writer to add or omit the Reason as he pleases, without Prejudice to the History, which depends on the Truth of the Fact only. St. *Matthew* has said nothing to intimate, that they did not bring *Spices*, nor has he assigned any other Reason for their coming; and, *the Considerer* excepted, I believe no Man can discern any Contrariety in the Accounts.

2. The second is, that St. *Matthew* says, the two *Marys* came to the Sepulchre; St. *Mark*, the two *Marys* and *Salome*; St. *Luke*, the Women who came from *Galilee*, and he reckons, ver. 11. the two *Marys*, *Joanna*, and other Women with them.

The three *Evangelists* agree in naming the two *Marys* as the principal Persons concerned; some

some of them mention others as being in their Company. And this is a Variation, which, I believe, happens in every Part of Story reported by different Writers, and is no Discredit to any. Suppose that three News-writers should give an Account of opening a Sessions of Parliament. — The first should say, “The King, attended “by the Prince, came to Parliament.” — The Second, “The King, attended by the Prince “and the Duke.” — The Third, “The King, “attended by the Prince, the Duke, and the “principal Officers of State:” Would any Man living imagine he saw Contradictions in these Accounts? Why then is the Gospel suspected in a Case, where no other History in the World would be suspected?

3. The same Answer may be applied to the third Variation, as far as it relates to the Number of Angels seen. The mentioning one was sufficient to answer all the purposes of the History; and he who says there were two, does not contradict him who mentions one, unless he has said, there was *but one*, which none of the *Evangelists* has said.

The *Considerer* thinks there is no Harmony among the *Evangelists*, because some speak of the Women seeing *Angels*, others call them *Men*. He might have said St. *Luke* contradicts himself; for he calls them both *Men* and *Angels*, in different Parts of his Relation. The Truth is, the Angels are sometimes called Men, because they appeared in the Form of Men; for the

the same Reason that *Abraham* called the Angels Men, who appeared to him on the Plains of *Mambre*.

4. St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* agree in the Message sent by the Angels to the Disciples, that he would *go before them into Galilee*. St. *Luke* has not expressly mentioned the Message, but has said nothing inconsistent with it. The Angels tell the Women, *He is not here; he is risen; remember how he spake unto you* — exactly agreeable to St. *Matthew*'s Account: *He is not here; he is risen, as he said.* As soon as the Women had received this Information from the Angels, he says they went and told the Disciples; and so says St. *Matthew*. The Message then, as delivered by the Angels, and whatever else happened at the Sepulchre at the first Visit made by the Women, stands clear of all Difficulties.

But it may be proper here to take Notice of the second Message given by our Saviour himself, and mentioned by St. *Matthew* and St. *John*. St. *Matthew* gives the second Message in the same Words with the first: *Tell my Brethren, that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.* St. *John* says, tell them, *I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.* It is very probable, that the Words in St. *Matthew*, and those in St. *John*, are Parts of the same Message; and St. *John*, finding the first Part reported by the *Evangelists* before him, left it as he found it, adding only

only the second Part. As the first Message imported no more, than that they should see him again, before he left them; and plainly intimated, that the Time was come to take leave of them (otherwise what Occasion was there to appoint this Meeting merely to see him, if he was to continue with them?) This being, I say, the Case, the other *Evangelists* mention the first Part of the Message as including the whole; St. John adds the latter Part, to explain and ascertain the Meaning. The whole Message then will stand thus: “ Go, tell my Disciples to go “ into Galilee; there they shall see me before “ I leave this World; and ascend to my Fa-“ ther and your Father, &c.” Is not this Message all of a piece? Does not one Part imply and infer the other? If the *Considerer* can think otherwise, he has a greater Talent (and indeed I think he has) of raising Contradictions, than any Philosopher, either *moral* or *immoral*, ever had before him.

The *Considerer*. has farther Difficulties still. By St. Luke, he says, *it appears, that the Men were at the Sepulchre after the Angels were gone; but by St. John, that they were there before the Angels came.* Therefore either the Men did not see the Angels, or the Witnesses do not agree in their Evidence about it^b. What a Work is here about nothing! Who told him the Men did see the Angels? It is manifest they did not.

* First Edit. p. 51, 52. Third Edit. p. 41.

The first Appearance of Angels was before Peter and John came; the second was after they were gone. But the Considerer wants a Reason to be given, why the Angels withdrew, as he expresses it, *upon the Mens coming*^a? He may as well enquire, why they are withdrawn now. If God thought proper to inform the Women of the Resurrection, by an Appearance of Angels, and not the Men, he had his Reasons, and wise ones doubtless, though the Considerer cannot see them.

But we have not yet done: St. Matthew reports that Mary held Jesus by the Feet, and worshipped him; St. John, that Jesus said to her, *Touch me not*. Here the Considerer is puzzled again; but what offends him, I cannot imagine. If Mary had not laid hold of Jesus's Feet, he could have had no Occasion to say, *Touch me not*. These Words therefore in St. John suppose the Case to have been as represented by St. Matthew; and yet the Considerer cannot, or will not see it.

From the Words, *Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father*; a Suspicion had been raised by Woolston, that Christ's Body was not a real tangible Body; and the Author of the Tryal had exposed and confuted so weak and groundless a Suggestion. "It could not, "as he had proved, be inferred from the "Words, *Touch me not*: for thousands say it

* First Edit. p. 51, 52. Third Edit. p. 41.

"every

" every Day, without giving the least suspicion,
 " that their Bodies are not capable of being
 " touched : nor from the Words *I am not yet*
 " *ascended to my Father*, for tho' there is a
 " Difficulty in these Words, there is no
 " difficulty in seeing that they have no
 " Relation to *Christ's Body*, for of his Body
 " nothing is said ^a." And what says the *Considerer*? why *If the Words*, touch me not (says he) *did not signify*, touch not my body, *what did they signify* ^b? The Author of the *Tryal*, you see, had said that these Words, *I am not ascended to my Father*, had no Relation to *Christ's Body*, and the *Considerer* represents him as saying, that the Words *touch me not* had no Relation to it. This is the *Considerer's* Method of answering Books ; because he finds it difficult to answer what the Author *has* said, he is resolved to confute what he has *not* said.

The next Appearance of *Christ* was on the Day of the Resurrection, to two Disciples in their Road to *Emmaus*. St. *Mark* has just mention'd this Story ^c. But we are indebted to St. *Luke* for the particulars of it ^d. One of the two, St. *Luke* tells us, was *Cleophas*; and the other, if we may believe the *Considerer*, was *Simon Peter*. Who it really was, is of little Importance in itself; that it was not *Simon Peter*, whatever he thinks of the Matter, is most evident. Had *Peter* been present, it is

^a Tryal p. 66. ^b First Edit. p. 53. Third Edit.
p. 42. ^c Chap. xvi. 12. ^d Chap. xxiv. 13, &c.

not likely that an inferior Disciple would have been the principal Spokesman ; especially when a Part of the Conversation turned upon *Peter* himself. It is the less likely, because St. *Peter* was probably then at *Jerusalem*, where the same Evangelist informs us the Eleven were gathered together^e. But to put the Matter out of all Doubt, when the two Disciples returned from *Emmaus* to the Apostles at *Jerusalem*, they found them discoursing about an Appearance of *Christ* to *Simon Peter* ; *The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon*^f. I desire to know, what Appearance the Evangelist means here? Is it that to the two Disciples in the Road to *Emmaus*? Impossible. These Disciples had not yet made their Report ; and it will be too much for the *Considerer* to say, that the Eleven knew it by Inspiration.

If the Reader is desirous to know how the *Considerer* came by this Notion, I think I can inform him. It is founded, if I mistake not, upon this very Passage, *the Lord is risen, and hath appeared to Simon*, which proves the direct contrary. Had the *Considerer* argued that *Moses* wrote the Pentateuch, therefore *Simon Peter* was the Companion of *Cleophas*, it would have been much more excusable ; because though it would not have proved his Conclusion to be true, it would not, as this Text does, prove it to be false. The *Considerer* supposes that to be a Report of the two Disciples to the Eleven,

^e Ibid. v. 24.

^f Ibid. v. 34.

which

which was in Fact a Report of the Eleven to them, viz. that *the Lord was risen and had appeared to Simon.* Insensible of this Blunder, evident as it is, he goes on, and raises this very wise Reflection upon it, that it *seems as if it did not appear to be the Lord to Cleophas, but to Simon only*^g; an Inference impertinent enough, had his Construction of the Passage been right; but what can be said of it, when the Construction is so manifestly wrong?

His Remarks upon the Story itself are just as groundless, as those upon the Persons of the two Disciples. He is, I suppose, offended at it, because there appears to be something miraculous in it. Miracles he treats every where as absurd and impossible, and seems to think that God has no more Authority in his own Creation than he and I have. St. *Mark* says, our Saviour appeared to the two Disciples in another Form; St. *Luke*, that *their Eyes were holden*; and this the Considerer places to the Account of Contradictions; “one Evangelist making the Cause to be in the Object, and the other in the Eyes”^h. It is strange the Gentleman will not understand common Language. Who does not see that the Evangelists meant to express the self same Thing? If Jesus appeared in *another Form*, *their Eyes* of course *were holden*, that they should not know him: All that the Historians mean to intimate is, that there was an Im-

^g First Edit. p. 55. Third Edit. p. 44. ^h First Edit. p. 55. Third Edit. p. 43, 44.

pediment, which prevented their knowing him. That this might happen either in a natural or supernatural way, the Author of the *Tryal* has shown, in a manner agreeable to Reason and true Philosophy, and such as will correspond exactly with the Expressions of both Evangelists. The *Considerer* has thought proper to take no Notice of This, or none that deserves any Answer.

One Question however he has put in Regard to this Story, to which I shall give him an Answer. The Question is this; *Can any good Reason be given, why Jesus did not discover himself to them by the Way, and give them the Joy, which such Discovery would have made?*¹

Now the Point discussed upon the Road was, whether it was not agreeable to Prophecy, that Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead. Christ himself undertook to prove this Proposition at large, from the Scriptures of the old Testament, and the Argument seemed to have its intended Effect. Suppose now he had first made himself known, and then entered upon this Argument, what would have been the Consequence? Plainly this; the Surprize of seeing one from the dead, and the Authority of Christ reasoning from the Scriptures, must have disturb'd their Judgment, and made them perhaps submit to his Interpretation of the Prophecies, without considering whether just or not. The plain Reason therefore, why the Discovery was not made sooner is, that he might

¹ First Edit. p. 55. Third Edit. p. 44.

convince their Understandings first, upon the Strength of Reason and Argument, whilst their Minds where yet free from any Impression by the Event itself, and the irresistible Force of *Christ's* own Authority. This Reason ought to have great weight with the *Considerer*, because it is founded on a Maxim very much talked of, though very little observed by the Gentlemen of his Stamp, that all Prejudice and Prepossession should be excluded in searching after Truth.

The Appearance of our Saviour at different Times, to the Women and to one or two of the Disciples detached from the rest, adds no small weight to the general Evidence of the Resurrection. But the greatest Point singly considered, is his shewing himself to the whole Body of Disciples; eating, drinking, and conversing with them, and giving them an Opportunity of being satisfied of the Fact at leisure, by all proper Methods of Tryal, and by the Variety of Evidence that a matter of Fact is capable of. Such Appearances there are several. The Credit of them stands upon the united Testimony of all the *New Testament* Writers. The four Evangelists, the Author of the *A&ts*, and St. *Paul* are unanimous in the Point. And what has the *Considerer* opposed to Evidence so full and strong? why he is puzzling himself and his Readers with some Circumstances of Time and Place, which he either does not, or will not understand; comparing the Conciseness of one Writer with the Copiousness of another, mistaking one Appearance for another, and with

with his usual Decency calling them *Inconsistencies, Improbabilities, Absurdities, and Contradictions*^k.

Be his Objections what they will, the Importance of the Subject demands, what the Writer has no Claim to, a serious Answer. I shall therefore compare the several Writers of the Gospel together, as to the manner of stating the Fact, and take Notice of the *Considerer's* Exceptions, as they fall in my Way. I would ask then, wherein do *Matthew, Mark, and Luke* differ as to the Point in Question? Do they not agree one and all that *Christ* shewed himself to the Eleven *Apostles*? This, I think, is granted. And do they not further agree with Regard to his Discourse, that it was in Sum and Substance the same? This the *Considerer* does not deny. Where then lies the Difference? Why *Matthew*, it seems, *disagrees with Luke as to Time and Place*; for *Matthew says it was at a Mountain in Galilee*; whereas, *according to Luke, it was at Jerusalem*^l. The *Considerer* will excuse me, if I take no Notice of his pretended Difference of Time; the Matter of Place being once explained, the Time will rectify itself.

It is allowed then, that the Place of Interview, according to St. *Matthew*, was in *Galilee*; according to St. *Luke*, at *Jerusalem*. What then? Does St. *Matthew* say that he met his Disciples no where but in *Galilee*, or St.

^k First Edit. p. 70. Third Edit. p. 5. ^l First Edit. p. 59. Third Edit. p. 47.

Luke that he saw them only at *Jerusalem*? Nothing like it. What hinders then, but that they might meet both in *Galilee* and *Jerusalem*? The *Considerer* thinks that, in the Sense of these Writers, they met *for the first and last Time*; but here again he concludes, as usual, a great deal too fast, and outruns his Evidence. Does either of them declare that it was the first and last Time? No. What Circumstance then is it, upon which the *Considerer* builds so positive a Conclusion? Why it is this; neither of these Writers mentions more than one Interview with *Christ* and his Apostles, therefore in their Sense of the Matter, there could be but one. Is this the Logic, that is to prove *Christ* and his Apostles to be Cheats and Impostors? *To show Mankind the stupid Nature of Bigotry, and to hold forth the acceptable Light of Truth?*^a Is it not amazing that a Man should set up for a Disturber of Religion, who is so poorly provided with that natural Logic of common Sense, which all Men are born with?

Had the *Considerer* had the least Inclination to treat the Gospel with any Fairness, he could not have mistaken so egregiously in this Part. *Matthew* and *Luke*, he observes, *disagree in Time and Place*. Is it not a natural Consequence that they speak of different Appearances? Doubtless it is. But instead of making this

^a Page 87, 72.

Use of it, he supposes them, without the least Proof for it, to speak of one and the same Appearance, and to contradict one another in assigning different Times and Places.

But that there may not remain any Doubt or Obscurity upon this Part of the History, it is proper to take notice of the Reason why the Message sent from the Sepulchre, appointed the Disciples to go into *Galilee* to see *Jesus*, though he notwithstanding appeared to them that very Night at *Jerusalem*.

Our Blessed Lord before his Crucifixion told his Disciples, *After that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee*^b. This was the Evidence he promised to give of his Resurrection; and *Galilee* probably was chosen for the Place, because he had spent much Time, and had many Disciples there, who were to have this Evidence given them. This then was the public Appearance, of which our Lord had given Notice in his Life-time; whereas the Appearances at *Jerusalem* were not upon Notice given, and were to the eleven Apostles, and to such only as happened to be with them.

The Angels therefore, and our Lord himself in his first Appearance, remind the Disciples to go into *Galilee*, to receive the Evidence he had promised to give them of his Resurrection. There was no Occasion to mention his Intention to see them that Night at *Jerusalem*, of which no Expectation had been given.

^b Matt. xxvi. 32.

Mark xiv. 28.

Now though the Appearance at *Jerusalem* was to the Eleven only ; yet the Message to meet him in *Galilee* was to all his Disciples. St. *Mark* makes the Promise of this Appearance to concern the Women as well as the Men. The Words of the Angels to the Women are, *there shall ye see him as he said unto you.* This then was a public Meeting before an Assembly warned to be present ; and here it was (as there is great Reason to suppose) that our Lord appeared to above five hundred Brethren at once, according to the Relation made by St. *Paul* .

The intermediate Appearance to the Apostles interfered not with this Appointment, which was observed by the Apostles, who went into *Galilee* to see *Jesus* there. This being the Appearance foretold, and the Evidence specially promised, St. *Mattthew* passes over all the other Appearances, and reports this as the Completion of our Lord's Prophecy, as the Assurance given in his Life-time, repeated by the Angels, and by himself at the Sepulchre. He mentions the Eleven only as travelling into *Galilee*, in Obedience to the Command they received ; but it is to be collected from his short Account, that others were present and saw the Lord—For he says of the *Eleven*, *When they saw him they worshipped him*—and adds, *but some doubted* ; who can hardly be supposed to be any of those,

1 Cor. xv.

who had seen him before at *Jerusalem*, and upon seeing him now worshipped him.

But it may be proper to consider under one View the several Appearances of *Jesus*, and the Order of them, as it may be called from the sacred Historians.

1. The first, which was at or near the Sepulchre, to *Mary Magdalene* and other Women, has been accounted for at large already.

2. That to the two Disciples going to *Emmaus* was on the Day of the Resurrection, and is attended with no material Difficulty arising from the Account as to Time or Place, or any other Circumstances. The Considerer has no Fault to find, but that there is something miraculous in the Circumstances of it. This too has been considered, as far as was necessary.

3. The same Day our Lord appeared to St. *Peter*, but whether before he conversed with the two Disciples or after, is not certain. It was not till after the two Disciples had left *Jerusalem*, and set out for *Emmaus*; for it appears in the Account they give our Lord of what had come to their Knowledge, that they knew nothing of any Appearance to *Peter*: And yet it was before these two Disciples returned to *Jerusalem*; for they found the Eleven discoursing of this Appearance to *Peter*. It is doubtful therefore whether of the two last mentioned should be placed first; but they both happened on the Day of the Resurrection.

4. The

4. The next in order is the Appearance on the Evening of the same Day unto the Eleven, mentioned by St. *Mark*, xvi. 14. and St. *Luke*, xxiv. 36. and St. *John*, xx. 19. St. *Luke* and St. *John* plainly enough describe the Time of this Appearance ; and that St. *Mark* means the same Appearance may be collected from our Saviour upbraiding the Eleven—*because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen*; which shows that this was the first Time, he had appeared to them himself.

5. The Appearance to the Eleven when *Thomas* was with them, *John*, xx. 26. which was eight Days after.

6. The Appearance to the seventy Disciples at the Sea of *Tiberias*, *John*, xxi. 1.

7. The Appearance in *Galilee* mentioned expressly by St. *Matthew* only, but referred to *Acts* i. 4.

8. The Appearance at *Jerusalem* before his Ascension, *Acts*, i. 6. It is plain this Appearance was at *Jerusalem*; for v. 4. our Lord orders the Apostles to tarry at *Jerusalem*; and that he met them just before his Ascension is evident, v. 12. for they returned to *Jerusalem*, from whence they had followed him to Mount *Olivet*, to be Witnesses of his Ascension.

I omit the Relation of Appearances given by St. *Paul*, *1 Cor.* 15. for his Account creates no Difficulty.

The Time of the five first Appearances is clear enough. The Sixth which is the Appearance

ance at the Sea of *Tiberias*, was before the Command given them, not to depart from *Jerusalem*, for after that Command they could not have gone to the Sea of *Tiberias*. The Seventh then was that wherein they received the Command to stay at *Jerusalem*, and was the Appearance appointed in *Galilee* by our Lord in his Life Time, and by the Angels at the Sepulchre. The Eighth was the last, and is rightly placed as to the Order of Time and as to the Place ; for it followed the Injunction to stay at *Jerusalem*, and was that wherein our Lord ascended, which was the last Appearance to the Apostles.

Let us see now whether by this Light, we can account for the Manner in which the Evangelists relate these Appearances. If you read *Matthew* by himself, you have an Account of one Appearance only. The same may be said with Respect to *Mark* and *Luke* ; who both seem to speak of the same Appearance, but manifestly a different one from that of St. *Matthew*, which was in *Galilee* ; whereas the other was at *Jerusalem*. How comes it now to pass that these Evangelists mention each of them but one Appearance, if there were indeed so many more ? The Truth is, that the Evangelists did not write full Histories of our Saviour's Life, but short Annals or Commentaries ; and sometimes contracted into one Discourse or Narration ; Things relating to the same Matter, though spoken or done at different Times. What St.

John

John says of his own Gospel, *Many other Signs did Jesus in the Presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book*,^d may be said very fairly of the rest. The Words of St. *John* follow immediately after the Account he has given of the Appearances to the Disciples after the Resurrection, and probably referred to the Opinion in his Gospel of many other Appearances made to the Disciples.

Now though St. *Matthew* reports only the Appearance in *Galilee*, and St. *Mark* and St. *Luke* seem to report only that on the Day of the Resurrection at *Jerusalem*; yet St. *Mark* has given a plain Intimation of that in *Galilee*, by the Message from the Angels to the Disciples; and St. *John* has reported and distinguished three Appearances, and given Notice that there were others not written in his Book.

St. *Luke* in the *Acts* of the Apostles has referred to several Appearances, telling us, that Jesus *shewed himself alive after his Passion by many infallible Proofs, being seen of them forty Days, and speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*.^e You have here a concise general Account of our Lord's appearing to his Disciples, and of the subject Matter of his Discourses to them at those Times, that he spoke of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. After this general Account he mentions two distinct Appearances, which were necessary to

^d John xx. 30. ^e Acts i. 3.

be taken Notice of, to introduce the Account he had to give of the Ascension. The first is, that wherein he orders them to *tarry at Jerusalem*; the second is that at *Jerusalem*, when he took leave of them and ascended. The first of these Appearances is remarkably introduced—*¶ 4. and being assembled together with them*; the Original is, *καὶ συναλιζόμενος*—supple *ἀντράς*; which Words are properly to be rendered, *and having assembled them together*.^f The other Appearances recorded seem to be accidental, by our Lord's coming in when the Eleven were not together; but this is spoken of as a Meeting summoned by himself, and was, I doubt not, that Meeting which he had appointed the Day of his Resurrection, by the Message sent to the Disciples by the Angels and by himself; and is the very same Meeting in *Galilee* mentioned by St. *Matthew*. At this Meeting St. *Luke* says, the Disciples received the Order to *tarry at Jerusalem*; after which they could not travel into *Galilee*, as they were commanded, and consequently this Appearance was itself the Appearance at *Galilee*; or happened after it, which there is no Reason to think.

The Disciples being thus ordered to *Jerusalem*, repair thither. *When they therefore were come together, they asked him, ¶ 6. Wilt thou at this Time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* This Question was not asked at the assembling men-

^f Vide *Grotium in loc.*

tioned *v* 4. which is clearly distinct from that mentioned *v* 6. for what Occasion was there to mention again their coming together, after we had been just told they were together? Had it been said, *then they asked, &c.* it would have been a Continuation of the Discourse with the same Assembly; but when their Meeting together is so distinctly mentioned, it shews it to be another and a different Meeting, after the Disciples were got together at *Jerusalem*.

At this Meeting our Lord assures them they should receive Power by the coming of the holy Ghost; then led them to *Bethany*, or *Mount Olivet*, and in their Presence ascended.

Let us examine now how far these particular Accounts will enable us to adjust the abridg'd Narration of our Saviour's Appearances in the three first Evangelists. The fullest is that of St. *Luke*; he mentions our Lord's appearing to the Eleven, and those with them on the Evening of the Resurrection. But it is manifest, under that Appearance, he brought together the Sum of what was done and said by our Saviour, during his Abode on Earth after the Resurrection. For he begins to speak of his Appearing the Day of the Resurrection, xxiv. 38. and continues his Narration to the Ascension, *v* 51. He tells us himself in the *Acts*, that there were forty Days between the Resurrection and Ascension. It is undeniable then, that his Account in the Gospel is an abridg'd Account of what passed, in our Lord's Meeting his Disciples

during that Time ; and this clearly appears to be the Case by comparing his abridg'd Account with the more particular Accounts already mentioned.

Luke xxiv. from $\text{v} 36$, to
40 inclusive — you have the
same Account of what passed } John xx. 19, 20.
at the first Appearance which }
St. John gives.

At $\text{v} 49$. you have what
passed at the Meeting in Ga- } Mat. xxviii. 16, &c.
ilee, mentioned by Matthew } Acts i. 4.
and Luke.

At $\text{v} 50$, 51. you have
what passed at the last Meet- } Acts i. 6—9.
ing at Jerusalem, before the }
Ascension mentioned in the } Mark xvi. 19.
Acts, and referred to in St.
Mark.

St. Luke says, that our Lord came to the Eleven just as the two Disciples had reported what had passed in the Journey to Emmaus ; and as our Lord expounded to them the Scriptures and eat with them, so now he gives the same Evidence and the same Exposition of the Scriptures to the rest : And surely it was a natural Thing to take up the same Discourse, and open the Understandings of the Eleven, as he had opened the Understanding of the two before, and to give them the same Evidence of the Reality

Reality of his Resurrection, and this takes up from v^{y} 41. to 48.

St. Mark's Narration is shorter than St. Luke's, but plainly of the same Kind: He begins with an Account of our Saviour's appearing, as St. Luke does, xvi. 14. and ends with his Ascension, v^{y} 19.

But as much abridged as these Accounts are, one material Thing there is, which none of the Writers have omitted, *wiz.* the Commission then given to the Apostles *to teach all Nations*, and in Consequence of it a Promise of Power and Assistance from above^g. St. Luke says, *Acta i. 3.* that the Subject of his Discourses to his Disciples were *the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*. These Things are transmitted to us by every Writer; and though none has mentioned every particular Appearance, yet the Sum of what was said at all the Appearances is faithfully recorded by all.

I have stated this Part of our Saviour's History for the Sake of those who have Patience and Attention enough to consider it; and I hope such may find some Light and Satisfaction from what has been said. But with regard not only to this, but to all other Parts of the History, it may be proper to observe, that the Number of Writers makes amends for the Deficiencies of any one. The Christian has a large Field to

^g Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. Mark xvi. 15. Luke xxiv. 47, 48, 49. John xx. 21, 22.

range in ; he is not to seek his Faith in one Evangelist, but in all. In all together he is sure to find a satisfactory Account of his Master's Life and Doctrine ; abundantly sufficient to direct his Judgment, to convince his Understanding, and to give him the Satisfaction that is proper for a rational Being.

It is to no Purpose to go over the *Considerer's* Objections to this Part of the History. If the Reader has the Curiosity to see them, he will find them all collected together at Pages 68, 69, of the First Edition, and 55, 56, of the Third. All he has said will, by comparing it with the foregoing Account, be found to be built on his own Mistakes. Some of them seem to be wilful ; he supposes *Matthew* and *Mark*, who report our Lord's Order to meet him in *Galilee*, to be contradicted by St. *Luke*, who reports an Order to them not to depart from *Jerusalem*^h. He could not, I think, but see, that these were different Orders, given at different Times, and upon different Occasions. But be it to himself.

His Objections to the Relation given of the Ascension of *Jesus*, are of the same kind, and they will be easily accounted for, by considering the Series of the Transactions above.

It is scarce worth while to observe, because it is obvious to the most indifferent Reader, that after the Revolt of *Judas*, *The Eleven* was the

^h First Edit. p. 58. Third Edit. p. 47.

current Style for the whole College of Apostles ; and after the Call of *Matthias* to the Apostolate, they were again called *the Twelve*. In Virtue of this Style, a general Meeting of the Apostles, is called a Meeting of *the Eleven*, or of *the Twelve*, though one or more may happen to be absent. This is agreeable to both ancient and modern Usage in the Case of Senates, Councils, and the like. Hence it is that St. *Luke* says, xxiv. 20. *the Eleven* were gathered together, though it appears by St. *John*, xx. 24. that *Thomas* was absent. St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* xv. 5. calls it a Meeting of *the Twelve*, because he was not converted till after the Election of *Matthias*, when that came again to be the usual Style. Had the *Considerer* had Sense enough to have seen this (and a very little would have been sufficient for the Purpose) he might have spared himself the Trouble and the Shame of charging St. *John*, St. *Luke*, and St. *Paul* with contradicting one another. But he might perhaps hope that his Readers would excuse a small Blunder, for the Sake of some Beauties, that rise out of it ; such as his Query (pag. 66.) with Regard to St. *Paul's* Account, whether *Judas* was there to make up the Number ? And his Excuse for the Apostle (p. 68.) that perhaps he had forgot that one of them was fallen asleep. Conceits which he is so fond of, that they have passed the Censure of his and his Friend's second Thoughts, and have still a Place in the last Edition, pag. 53—55.

The Story which St. John has left us of St. Thomas is so strong a Proof of the Resurrection of Christ, and so remarkable an Evidence of the Reality of his Body, that I do not wonder to find the Considerer displeased with it. He has attacked it with a double Portion of the Spirit of Folly and Impiety, and has not that I can find dropt any thing, that carries the Face of an Objection. *He thinks his Infidelity very extraordinary, because he would not believe that Jesus was risen from the Dead, except he saw and felt the Wounds that caused his Death,* and asks if these were better to be known than the Form of his Person, which they had so often seenⁱ. This I am afraid carries an Implication with it, which the Considerer was not aware of ; that Thomas had no Reason to be so nice and scrupulous ; that the Evidence of Sight, and the well known Idea of his Face and Person were sufficient for Conviction. Truth, I find, will sometimes obtrude itself upon a Man, even against his Thoughts and Inclinations. As to the Wounds that caused his Death there is not, that I can find, one Word about Wounds in this whole Story. The τύπος τῶν ἥλων, the Print of the Nails, or the Scar that was left after the Wounds were cured is two or three Times repeated, but nothing further. Why then does the Considerer talk of Wounds ? Why, to introduce this very wise Question, *Is it to*

ⁱ Ibid.

be supposed that the Power which raised him to Life did not cure those Wounds ? It is with just as little Meaning that he asks, whether another Person who might have a Mind to deceive could not make Scars ? The Reader, I believe, will not expect to have a formal Confutation of such impertinent and senseless Suggestions ; barely reciting them is exposing them effectually.

Much about the same Size with these is another Exception he makes to this Story. Because the Wound in the Side is mentioned only by St. John, he thinks Thomas and the other Apostles knew nothing of the Matter ^a. As if so extraordinary a Circumstance was likely to be a Secret to any of them ; and as if Thomas's direct Appeal to this Circumstance was not a Demonstration, that it was no Secret to him. I leave it with the Reader, without any farther Answer, as one Instance, amongst a Thousand, of the Folly and Absurdity into which a Man is sure to be betrayed, when the unclean Spirit of Singularity has once seized him. The Considerer has said something more of this Piece of History, but it is so like the Sample already given, that it would be an Affront to the Reader to take anyfurther Notice of it.

After having gone through his Proofs against the Credit of the Gospel-History, the Considerer returns to the *Tryal of the Witnesses*. The Author of the *Tryal* had observed, that in all Cases of Consequence Men take Care to make Choice of proper unexceptionable Witnesses,

^a Ibid.

that the same Care was taken in the Resurrection, and then adds, " How comes it to pass then, that " the very Thing which shuts out all Suspicion in " other Cases, should in this Case only be of all " others the most suspicious Thing itself." The Considerer answers, *because this Case of all others is the most uncommon*¹. Is that a Reason why it should not be supported by the best Evidence, that human Wisdom is able to think of in the most material Cases ? He goes on ; *Is it not absurd, that the meanest Witnesses should be pick'd and cull'd out for the best and greatest Affairs?* What he intends by the *meanest* I know not. Men may surely be good Witnesses without having great Estates, and be able to report what they see with their Eyes without being Philosophers : As far then as the Truth of the Resurrection depended on the Evidence of Sense, the Apostles were duly qualified. But how comes he to lay such Stress upon their *Meanness* ? did their Meanness stand in the Way of the Evidence, which arose from the great Powers with which they were endowed from above ? Consider their natural and supernatural Qualifications, they were in every respect proper Witnesses ; take these Qualifications together, and they were Witnesses without Exception. But the Considerer thinks the Apostles were *interested in the Affair, and that half a dozen Watchmen would have been better than a dozen Apostles*^m. I

* Tryal, p. 47. ¹ First Edit. p. 72. 3. Third Edit. p. 58. ^m First Edit. p. 94. Third Edit. p. 64.

would

would fain know, what sort of Witnesses he requires. Suppose half-a-dozen Watchmen had seen and believed the Resurrection, I doubt their being Believers would have been, in his way of Reckoning, an Objection; he would have told us, they expected Commissions in *the Messiah's Army*⁴. Would he then have Evidence from Unbelievers? A Witness, who does not believe the Truth of what he affirms, is a mere Cheat. No body therefore could be a Witness to the Resurrection but a Believer; and such an one he esteems to be interested. But this is an absurd Objection, because it is an Objection to every honest Witness that ever lived; for every honest Witness believes the Truth of what he says. If he means to charge the Apostles with Views or Hopes of temporal Advantage to themselves, he shews himself to be a mere Stranger to the History of the Church, or wilfully imposes on his ignorant Readers. How much the Apostles endured and suffered for the Testimony of the Truth; what Havock was made among the Converts to Christianity, by Persecution upon Persecution, for three hundred Years together, 'till the Empire became Christian, is as notorious as any Part of History; and he may as well, and with as much Truth, deny that there were any Heathen Emperors of

* Page 44. ---- 35.

Rome, as that the Apostles, and first Christians, were afflicted, tormented, and put to cruel Deaths by them.

In the next Page the *Considerer* repeats the old Objection, “ that Jesus did not shew himself to the Jews after his Resurrection.” This Plea had been examined, and answered in the *Tryal*; and since the *Considerer* has thought fit to pass over in Silence what he found there, I must refer the Reader to the *Tryal* itself for an Answer to this old Objection. And, if he wants farther Satisfaction, I recommend to him a little Piece wrote upon this Point only, and published in 1730^d. The *Considerer* wonders, *that an extraordinry Action, — highly necessary to be known to Mankind, should be so secretly done, that no Man saw it; — and that Jesus should require Men to believe his Disciples, rather than their own Senses*^e. When so many saw him dead, and so many saw and conversed with him after he arose from the Grave, it is surprizing to hear this Assertion, *that no Man saw the Resurrection*. Is any thing more wanting to complete a sensible Proof of a Resurrection, than to see a Man dead and buried, and to see him alive again? But, it seems, the Jews could not believe the Disciples in the

^d An impartial Examination, and full Confutation of the Argument, &c. against the Truth of our Saviour's Resurrection, viz. That he appeared only to the Disciples. Printed for J. Roberts in Warwick-lane, 1730.

^e First Edit. p. 73. Third Edit. p. 59.

Report they made of the Resurrection, without contradicting *their own Senses*. They had then, in this Writer's Opinion, the Evidence of *Sense* against the Truth of the Resurrection. This is great News, and it is Pity this Evidence was not produced ; it would have been material to inform us, which of their Senses afforded that Evidence ; and by what Means he came to know this Piece of Evidence which the *Jews* had, and which the World never heard of before, and which probably they will never hear of again.

The Author of the *Tryal* had taken Notice of our Saviour's Prediction just before his Death, that the *Jews* should see him no more, till they said, *Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord*^a ; and then added, “ The *Jews* were not “ in this Disposition after the Resurrection, “ nor are they in it yet” ^b. The *Considerer* says that *Jesus himself found them in that Disposition before his Death*^c ; and he refers for Proof of this bold Assertion to *Luke* xix. 38. The Case there is this : Upon our Lord's Entrance into *Jerusalem*, the Multitude of Disciples cryed, *Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord*. This was the Language of the Disciples only, and the *Considerer* does not think all the *Jews* were Disciples. How comes he

^a Luke xiii. 35.

^b Tr. p. 77.

^c First Edit. p. 76. Third Edit. p. 62.

then to abuse the Scripture and his Reader so grossly, as to quote this Passage as a Proof of the Disposition of the *Jews*? Did he not read in the very next verse that the Pharisees called upon *Christ*, to rebuke the *Disciples* for what they said? How could he be so shameless as to give this for Evidence, that the *Jews* were in a good Disposition, which proves so undeniably that they were in a bad one?

The Author of the *Tryal* observed, that notwithstanding the Story propagated among the People, that the Disciples stole the Body, yet in all the Persecutions raised against them upon several Pretences, as of Heresy, Sedition, &c. they never were charged with *any Fraud* in the Resurrection. He observed too that the Christian Faith being grounded on the Truth of the Resurrection, as the Basis and Foundation of the whole, “The thing for which they suffered was the Truth of the Resurrection”. So then, says this smart Writer, *the chief Priests never so much as charged the Apostles with any Fraud in the Resurrection, but they put them to Death because they believed it*^a.

I wish this Writer loved trifling less, or that I liked it better, for at present 'tis too hard Work to follow him. But I submit, and desire him to say, whether every Man

^a First Edit. p. 83. Third Edit, p. 69.

that does not believe the Story of the stealing the Body by the Disciples, must necessarily believe the Resurrection ; if not, then surely the chief Priests might, consistently with their Notions, persecute the Apostles for preaching the Resurrection, though they did not charge them with stealing the Body, or any Fraud in contriving the Resurrection.

The Evidence of the Spirit in the Signs and Wonders wrought by the Disciples in Confirmation of the Truth of their Doctrine, was insisted on in the *Tryal*, and I refer the Reader to it, since the *Considerer* has made no Reply to it. He says, *in this Age we have almost lost it, except amongst the Disciples of the inspired Mr. Whitfield, who has blown up a new Light of it — and has ventilated it by his Bellows^a.* What can be done with this profane Buffoonry ! I am sorry to see it ; and if the Author is not quite obdurate, I wish he may come to such a Temper of Mind, as to be sorry for it too.

When the Apostles were brought before the chief Priests and the Council of the Jews, and preached to them the *Resurrection*, *Gamaliel*, one of the Council, said, *If this be the Work of Men, it will come to Nought ; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it^b.* From this Passage the Author of

^a First Edit. p. 84. Third Edit. p. 69.
38, 39.

^b Acts v.

the

the Tryal argued, that Gamaliel could not possibly have said this, or the Council heard it with Patience, if they had believed the Resurrection a Cheat, and that the Disciples had stole the Body. The Argument was too strong for the Considerer, and therefore he questions the Truth of Gamaliel's uttering these Words^c; and for Fear that should not be sufficient, he says, Gamaliel might be be so much a Philosopher, as well as a Scholar, to dissuade them from rigid Persecution. How his Philosophical Notion of Persecution comes in here is hard to say; one would think he was dreaming of Persecution and talking in his Sleep. The Question is, How Gamaliel could make the Supposition, that the Resurrection might be the Work of God, if he knew it to be the Fraud and Cheat of Men? What has his Notion of Persecution to do here? Besides, if Gamaliel knew the Apostles to be Cheats, would his Philosophy about Persecution incline him to spare Cheats, who (if they were Cheats) were guilty of Forgery and Perjury and every other Crime, necessary to carry on such a Fraud?

The Case of Agrippa, and the Argument from it in the Tryal is much of the same Kind. The Considerer supposes Agrippa to mean, that Paul was mad, and says, he had told Paul before, he was a Madman^d. Agrippa never did tell Paul so. The Considerer, I

^c First Edit. p. 86. Third Edit. p. 71.

^d Ibid.

suppose

suppose, mistook *Agrippa* for *Festus*. It was natural for the *Roman Soldier*, who knew nothing of the *Jewish Prophets*, when he heard *Paul* appealing to them, to say, *much Learning had made him mad^e*; but to put these Words into *Agrippa's Mouth*, who was bred up in a Regard to the Prophets, is quite out of Character, as well as false in Fact.

IV.

We have now gone through the *Considerer's Exceptions* to the Evidence of the Resurrection, and to the Defence of that Evidence in the *Tryal of the Witnesses*; but the Business is not yet over. The *Considerer* has one Argument still in Reserve, which, were there any thing in it, would strike at the Credit of Revelation in general. He had given his Opinion of Miracles incidentally in several Parts of his Book, but at the Conclusion he endeavours to support it at large. He thinks, " That Miracles of any Kind are " impossible and exclude all Evidence; that " they are an Absurdity to common Sense " and Understanding; that they are in- " consistent with the Reason of Man and " Nature of Things; that they contradict " all that Mankind calls Truth and Reason; " that they are contrary to the Experience " and Reason of all Mankind, and utterly " impossible."

* Acts xxvi. 24.

First Edit. p. 64. 89, 90, 91.
Third Edit. p. 52. 74. 75.

I shall discuss this Point with him, and see what Reason he has thus to dogmatise in Opposition to the general Opinion of all Mankind in all Ages of the World.

For the Possibility of the Resurrection, I must do the Reader the Justice once more to refer him to the *Tryal of the Witnesses*; where he will find this Point stated and explained in such a Manner that no Man, that is less a Sceptic than the *Considerer*, can have any Doubt about it. The *Considerer* has made a Shew of answering this Part of the *Tryal*, without stating the Author's Argument, without seeming to understand one Word of the Scope of it, and without citing one Sentence fairly. So far as that Author is concerned, it is sufficient to say in his own Words, what is the real Truth, *that he has said nothing upon this Occasion, than what any Man who never saw Ice, might say against an hundred honest Witnesses, who assert that Water turns to Ice in cold Climates*^b.

For the Reason and Possibility of Miracles in general, I shall now beg Leave to talk with him. He is very frank in declaring his Opinion with regard to this Point, and I have said it before the Reader in his own Words. Nothing can well be stronger than the Lan-

^b *Tryal*, p. 60.

guage in which he has expressed it. He seems plainly to declare that Miracles are not only impossible in a moral, but in a physical Sense ; that they are not only inconsistent with the moral Attributes, but impossible even to the Power of God.

But be this as it will. I shall take the Arguments, as he himself has stated them, and examine them by the Rules of common Language and common Sense. He has indeed so involved himself in Words, that when he has a Meaning, it is not easy to come at it. Reason, right Reason, Truth, and the Nature of Things, are Words of great Weight in the Apprehensions of most Men. Let us see what Place they hold in the *Considerer's* Estimation. *What Conceptions any Man frames to himself of the Course of Nature from his own Experience and Observation, are not Prejudices and Imaginations ; but what Sense and Reason are concerned about. This is the very Foundation of that Right Reason, which can never contradict the Truth of Things^a.* In the first Edition it stands thus, *This is the very Foundation of right Reason ; and Reason, formed from hence, can never contradict the Truth of Things^b.*

If every Man's Notion of the Course of Nature is the very Foundation &c. of right Reason ; then right Reason varies as much

^a Third Edit. p. 74.

^b Page 90.

as People's Notions of the Course of Nature. — It is then right Reason that says the Sun goes round the Globe, for this the Vulgar reckon to be the Course of Nature. It is right Reason also, to say the Sun is fixed, and the Planets move round him; for this appears from the *Experience* and *Observation* of Astronomers to be the Course of Nature. But how absurd is it to make right Reason depend upon the Notions, which Men entertain of the Course of Nature; when it is the very Office and Business of Reason to rectify the Errors, which Men perpetually fall into in the Judgments they make in this Case. Experience and Observation shew, that a Cane half in the Water, and half out, is crooked; but Reason, upon the Principle of true Science, informs us otherwise. Here then Experience and Observation are on one Side, and Reason on the other: And the same Conclusion holds true in a thousand Instances, and every Instance indeed where Men make a wrong Judgment of what they see. And the Fault in this Case does not lye in the Experience and Obseryation, but in the reasoning upon them. Thus Men do not err in their Observation, when they say that Water never grows solid in hot Climates; but they err in reasoning upon this Observation, and concluding that the Case can never be otherwise. That Men dye, and come not to Life again here, is a true Observation: But will this

this Observation prove that it can never be otherwise? We see by Observation the Effects of the Course of Nature, but this Course of Nature depends on Causes removed out of our Sight. Observation shews how these Causes operate generally, but cannot shew that they are immutable, and must operate invariably in every Instance.

But let us see how he reasons the Point of Miracles. Take the Proposition as it stands, first Edit. p. 90. and third Edit. p. 74. with the Reason annexed. *Things asserted which are contrary to the Experience and Reason of all Mankind, and what they know of the Law and usual Course of Nature (i. e. Miracles) are to the common Sense and Understanding of Man utterly impossible.* We must rectify the Proposition, before we come to the Reason. In the first Part, which is intended as a Description of Miracles, the Considerer assumes too much; a Miracle is indeed contrary to common Experience, and the usual Course of Nature, but why contrary to Reason? If by Reason he means right Reason or Truth, it is supposing the very Thing in Question: If he means the Faculty of Reason, it will come to the same Thing, supposing that Faculty to be rightly used, otherwise it is nothing to the Purpose.

With the Considerer's Leave then, I shall expunge the Word *Reason* (which will not injure the Argument) and the Proposition

will stand thus; *Things asserted, which are contrary to the Experience of all Mankind, and to what they know of the Laws and usual Course of Nature (i. e. Miracles) are, to the common Sense and Understanding of Men, utterly impossible.* Now comes the Reason; because such *Assertions contradict all Mens Notions of such Laws, that are known by Experience.* That is to say, Things contrary to Experience are impossible, because they are contrary to Experience; or things contrary to what Men know of the Laws of Nature, are impossible, because they are contrary to what Men know of the Laws of Nature. This is what the Considerer calls giving a Reason.

But I cannot yet part with the Proposition. Miracles, it seems, *are to the common Sense and Understanding of Men impossible.* How are we to understand this Expression? does he mean impossible to the Reason of Men, or impossible to the Conceptions of Men? Impossible to the Reason of Man they are not, because the Reason of Man tells him, there is a Being, who originally gave Laws to Matter and regulates the Course of Nature; and consequently who can, if he pleases, alter or suspend those Laws, and change the Course of Nature. If he means that Miracles are impossible to the Conceptions of Men, it is granted; that is, it is granted that Men do not conceive how they are wrought; they do not

not conceive how, or in what manner, a dead Body is raised to Life, nor how, or in what manner, a Word only should give a blind Man Sight. In this Sense the *Considerer's* Proposition may be true, but then it is nothing to his Purpose. Miracles are inconceivable : Yes, and so are many things that happen every Day, which we do not reckon miraculous. It is inconceivable how Matter acts on Matter, either in Gravitation, Attraction, Magnetism, or in any other well known Operation ; but we do not therefore give the Lye to our Senses, and say it does not act, because we cannot conceive how it acts. So that if the *Considerer* means that Miracles are impossible to the Reason of Men, it is evidently false ; if he means that they are impossible to the Conceptions of Men, it may be true, but is quite beside his Purpose.

But let us see how this Point is argued in the next Page. Perhaps we shall meet with a better Reason there. *To believe it possible*, (i. e. for a dead Body to rise again) *contradicts this Maxim*, “ That Nature is steddy and uniform in her Operations.” Nature, or the Laws of Nature, would doubtless, when not controuled by the Author of Nature, operate steddily and uniformly. A Lyon would produce a Lyon, an Acorn an Oak : Matter would continue to gravitate, human Beings to dye, and dead Bodies to mix with the Earth, and not come to Life again. What does

does the Maxim prove then ? Only that a dead Body cannot come to Life again in the natural Way. No body disputes this with the *Considerer*. The Question is, Whether it may not be done in a supernatural Way ; whether the great Author of Nature, whenever he thinks it convenient, cannot supersede or suspend the general Laws of Nature. Will the *Considerer* deny this ? If he believes a God and a Providence, as he professes to do, he cannot. Well ; but it contradicts the aforesaid Maxim, because, *one Miracle or Action done contrary to her* (i. e. Nature's) *Laws, contradicts all her regular Springs and Movements, and all that Mankind calls Truth and Reason.* How does such an Action contradict all Nature's uniform Movements ? Does it imply that her Movements are not uniform, when uncontrouled ? Nothing like it. Does it imply that they are not uniform in that particular Instance ? that is, that her Movements in that Instance are contrary to the general Course of Nature ? Most certainly it does, for it is of the Essence of a Miracle to be contrary to the general Course of Nature. What then ? This proves nothing ; it is only giving the Thing in Dispute as a Reason against itself. But let us hear the other Part of the Reason, *A Miracle contradicts all that Mankind calls Truth and Reason.* How does this appear ? Why you must take the *Considerer's* Word for it. But does he not know

know that it is the very Thing in Question? The Enquiry is, Whether Miracles are contrary to Reason. The *Considerer* undertakes to prove that they are; and how does he prove it? Why thus; “Miracles are contrary to Reason, because they contradict this Maxim, that Nature is steady and uniform in her Operations.” And how do they contradict this Maxim? Why, because they contradict what Mankind calls Truth and Reason.” Is not this saying that Miracles are contrary to Reason, because they are contrary to Reason?

A Miracle, the *Considerer* says, contradicts all that Mankind calls Truth and Reason. Let us try it in a particular Instance. We read in the Gospel, that our Saviour walked upon the Water. What Truth or what Reason does this contradict? It is a well known Truth that all Bodies gravitate, and it is another that human Bodies will sink in Fluids. Does it contradict either or both these Truths? surely not. All Bodies continue to gravitate, and human Bodies to sink in Fluids, as they did before; and *Christ's* own Body followed the same Law of Gravitation, that particular Case only excepted. All that this Fact supposes is, that there is a Power in Nature that can suspend the Laws of Gravity, or change Fluids into Solids. If this is contradicting Truth, let the *Considerer* shew it.

It is an unwelcome and an unprofitable Task, to deal with an Author who gives Words only, for Arguments. By the Specimen I have given of this Author's Reasoning upon the natural Possibility of Miracles, the Reader, I believe, will find this to be the Case here. He goes on to shew, that they are impossible in a moral View, that, supposing God to have Power over his own Works, or as he expresses it^c, *that he can do Things contrary to Nature, there is no Reason that he ever did or will do it.* It is, he thinks, contrary to the Perfection of his Nature, to his Unchangeableness, his Wisdom, his Justice, and his Goodness. Let us see how he proves it.

Those, says he^d, who found Religion on extraordinary Pretensions, say, that Nature, which is the Offspring of God, is degenerate and deficient. It is not easy to deal with an Author, who uses Terms so equivocally, that one can come at his Meaning only by Guess. It is difficult to say, what we are to understand by *Nature*. If by *Nature* the *Considerer* means, what he seems most commonly to understand by it, the Constitution of the material World, the Proposition is evidently false: Extraordinary Pretensions do not imply that *Nature*, in this Sense, is deficient, nor indeed do they imply

any thing with regard to Nature; for what Connection is there between the extraordinary Pretensions of the Christian Religion, and the Perfection of the material World? When our Lord, for Instance, by a Word caused the Fig-tree to wither, did it suppose any *Deficiency* in the Constitution of Vegetables? No more than if the Tree had been felled by an Axe. Whatever the Constitution of Vegetables, or whatever the Constitution of the material World be, such Actions declare nothing either as to their Perfection or Imperfection; they only declare that the God of Nature has Authority over his own Workmanship.

But perhaps by *Nature* the Considerer means *human Nature*, or *the moral Nature of Man*. Let us try the Proposition in this Sense. *Those who found Religion on extraordinary Pretensions, say, that human Nature, which is the Offspring of God, is deficient.* Man is subject to Error and Corruption; and, in this Sense, human Nature may well be said to be deficient, whether God interposes or not. Whether Religion be founded on extraordinary Pretensions or not, human Nature is still deficient; if this be an Objection under revealed Religion, it is an Objection under natural Religion too. When a Youth is taught to read and to write; when he is instructed in Religion and the Sciences; does it not imply, that human Na-

ture wants Help, and is in itself deficient? And what does it imply more, when God vouchsafes to help and assist it? It is very improper, it is false to say, *the Offspring of God, or the Work of God is deficient*; but it is not improper to say, that Man is imperfect or *deficient*. The Truth is, the Sense of the Word *deficient* is different in one Case from what it is in the other. God's Works are said to be perfect in this particular View, that they are adapted to the End for which they were designed; and yet Man, or any other created Being, is imperfect or *deficient*, when compared with a greater Being, and especially when compared with the greatest of all Beings.

The *Considerer* has another Argument, which bears a near Resemblance to this, and is as follows: *The whole Production of God's Wisdom, Goodness, and Power must be a perfect Work; therefore cannot be better.* — If God be a perfect Being, his Works are perfect, and cannot be mended^a. The *Considerer* talks sometimes of Providence; I should be glad to know, what is his Notion of Providence. He seems to suppose, that God formed the Universe, as a vast Machine, with the several Orders of Beings in it, and then, like the *Epicurean Deities*, left it to shift for itself, without concerning him-

^a First Edit. p. 95. Third Edit. p. 79.

self at all about it. If there be such a thing as *Providence*, which the *Considerer* himself confesses, if God ever interposes in his own Creation, it must be to mend something, though not to mend his own original Work. It is not proper to say, that God's Work is *mended* by Revelation, as the *Considerer* supposes, in any other Sense than it is mended by a good School-master, or an able Professor of the Sciences. Revelation indeed *mends* or improves Men, that is, it furnishes them with greater and better Lights than mere Reason could; but it alters not the Nature and Constitution of Men, it affects not the original Workmanship of God.

But farther: The material World is (like all Machines of human Contrivance) governed by necessary Laws, and the Constitution of it cannot be altered by any Power within itself. But it is not so in the moral World. Man was originally endued with Properties of a different kind from those of Matter. He has a Power over his own Actions, a Power of improving or depraving his moral Nature. One Man makes the proper Improvement of the Powers which Nature gave him, another abuses them. One Nation, or one Age makes high Advances in Knowledge and Virtue, another is sunk in Ignorance and Corruption. If such Enormities are the natural Consequences of the original Constitution of Man,

what Reason is there to exclude Providence from regulating and correcting them? If the System of Man is to be considered under the Notion of one great Machine, it must be considered as a Machine that has a Power within itself of putting itself out of Order; and, if it should be out of Order, as from the Nature of its several Springs and Wheels it may well be supposed to be, where is the Impropriety of the great Artificer interposing and correcting it? If Man has a Power of chusing Good or Evil, he may chuse the latter; if he has Faculties for discovering Truth, he may notwithstanding neglect it, he may overlook or mistake it: It is easy to see what Room here is for Error and Corruption. So that, however perfect the original Work was, it may in time, from the Nature of the thing, want mending.

Natural Powers, the Considerer says, are fit to answer all the Ends of Religion, therefore *supernatural Powers* are needless^a. What he means by answering the Ends of Religion, he tells you in what follows; to teach the most excellent Morals, with a reasonable Belief of one God and Providence. I shall not dispute with the Considerer, how far some Men may advance upon the Strength of mere Reason: Some have no doubt gone great

^a First Edit. p. 93. Third Edit. p. 77.

Lengths ; but Man, the *Considerer* knows, is not infallible. He may embrace Error under the Notion of Truth, and teach it as such ; and the Corruption may spread and become general. What is to be done in this Case ? The *Considerer* seems to think that a *Man of honesty and Understanding* would be well able to cure his Disorder, without *supernatural Endowments*. I am not of his Opinion ; inveterate Error is not to be expelled so easily ; human Reason and human Authority, especially when it comes to be general, do not seem to be a Match for it. If we may Reason from Fact, there is nothing more sure than this. There were no doubt some Men of *Honesty and Understanding* in the heathen World ; but what Progress did they make in reforming it ? how far did they advance in removing that universal Corruption with which it was overrun ? Take a View of Paganism from the Time of *Socrates* to the Time of *Christ*, the most enlightened Period of Antiquity, and see what Progress Truth had made. What were the public Institutions of Religion, but the worst and grossest Superstition and Impiety ? So much of Truth as had been discovered was confined to the Few ; and if happily they might chance to keep it, it was not likely to get any farther. Every National Religion was looked on as the Dictates of the Gods, and forbid to be alter'd by Man ; so that Truth was as it were

were prohibited by Law. How then was it to be recovered, with the civil Power and the Prejudices and Passions of Mankind against it? Let the Considerer shew, if he can, that a *Man of Honesty and Understanding without any supernatural Powers* would be equal to this Work.

But the Considerer thinks a *Power of working Miracles is contrary to the Unchangeableness of God*; for the same Causes, he says, must always produce the same Effects^a. His Reason, if he intended it as a Reason, is a very unlucky one. I cannot see the most distant Relation between the Premises and the Conclusion. *The same Causes produce the same Effect.* Right! but in Miracles a new Cause is introduced; and if his Argument proves any Thing, it proves that natural Causes will not produce Miracles; but do we ascribe Miracles to natural Causes? He goes on; *But Miracles are urged to prove a Change in the Will of God; that is, impossible Things are urged to prove an Impossibility.* According to the Considerer, it seems, it is a Principle agreed on by both Believers and Unbelievers, that Miracles are used to prove a Change in the Will of God. If you grant him this, and admit too that Miracles are impossible, he will draw this notable Conclusion, *that Impossibilities are urged to prove an Impossibility.*

^a First Edit. p. 94. Third Edit. p. 78.

But suppose neither of them is granted, what will become of his Conclusion? The Reader has already seen his Reasons, if they may be called Reasons, for thinking Miracles to be impossible. But what Pretence has he to say, that Miracles are urged to prove a Change in the Will of God? where or when were they ever urged to this Purpose? or how indeed do they prove it? The *Considerer* is entirely silent as to all these Points, and yet he goes on reasoning upon the Supposition of Miracles proving a Change, nay, of their being allowed to prove a Change in the Will of God.

The *Considerer* has puzzled himself unaccountably with the Immutability of God, than which there is not one Attribute in the divine Nature more clear and precise. It is his Being and Perfections that are immutable, and not his Actions, unless you will suppose Men, and all other Beings immutable too. His Actions are always the same, when Circumstances are the same; but what Sense is there in supposing that immutable Wisdom must act in all Cases, how different soever, in the same Way? The Counsels of Providence are directed by unerring Wisdom; but the same Wisdom prescribes different Measures upon different Occasions. Miracles of themselves can be no Proof that God's Counsels are mutable, either with respect to the natural or the

the moral World; not with respect to the natural, because suspending some one Law of Matter to serve some moral Purpose, is no Proof that the Counsel of God is changed with regard to the general Laws and Constitution of Matter; not in the moral, because Miracles may, for any Thing that appears to the contrary, be useful to answer some moral End, and to serve the great Purposes of Providence, in some Cases and not in others.

This the *Considerer* is not willing to allow; for if Miracles were ever necessary, they must in his Judgment be always necessary.

The *Considerer* has so good a Talent at Reasoning, that I cannot refuse him and the Reader the Justice of producing his Argument, as he himself has stated it. *If Miracles were ever necessary, whether the divine and human Nature, or the Nature of things be CHANGEABLE OR UNCHANGEABLE, must be always necessary.* For if God ever wrought Miracles to be the Proof of the Knowledge of his Will, he will always pursue the same Methods, IF HE IS AN UNCHANGEABLE BEING^b. "That is to say, "The Proposition is true, whether God be "changeable or not, for a Reason which expressly supposes him to be unchangeable." The *Considerer* has generally the Fortune to have his Positions and his Reasons hang very ill

^b First Edit. p. 96. Third Edit. p. 80.

together.

together. But let us examine the latter Part of the Argument by itself, and see what there is in it. " God is an unchangeable Being : " Therefore, if he ever wrought Miracles as " a Proof of his Will, he will always pursue " the same Method." It is allowed that God is an unchangeable Being. It follows from thence that his Conduct will always be the same, in the same State of Things ; if he works Miracles in one Case, he will do it again whenever the same Case, with all its Circumstances, returns. But if he does it when the State of Mankind requires it, it does not follow that he will do it, when the State of Mankind does not require it. Let the *Considerer* shew that it cannot be expedient for Mankind at one time, and not at an other. Till he can prove this, he proves nothing. Let us try his Reasoning in a common Case. Should the Subjects of some great Prince rise in Arms against him, and should he quiet them by offering a general Pardon without punishing their Crime ; will it follow that he ought to pursue the same Method in every Rebellion ? And will it follow that his Counsels are mutable, if he does not ? The *Considerer* himself will not have the Folly to assert it. Lenity may be necessary at one time, and Severity at another ; and each of these Measures, tho' not only different but opposite, may be the Effect of the same Wisdom and Prudence.

But if God has wrought Wonders in one Generation and not another, it seems, he must be a partial Being ^c. The Considerer does not know what he is about when he charges God with Partiality. According to his little View of Things, Providence may be accused as partial in many other Instances, and with more Appearance of Reason than in this. Why does he not complain that one Man has greater natural Endowments than another, that he is superior in Wealth, in Dignity, in Power, or whatever else is esteemed great and illustrious? If that is to be looked on as Partiality, which the Considerer judges to be such, I leave him to reflect where his Opinion will terminate. He says, “ That Miracles are equally necessary to all People, and therefore if God grants them to one Generation and not another he is a partial Being.” If bold Assertions were to be admitted as Proofs, there is nothing which the Considerer is not capable of proving. Let him prove (instead of asserting) that Miracles are equally necessary in all Ages; and then it will be time to talk with him. Here is a Maxim which the Considerer himself allows to be a just one, that Providence does nothing in vain. If then a Series of Wonders are wrought in one Age, why may not the Memory of them be duly preserved for the Benefit of succeeding

^c First Edit. p. 98. Third Edit. p. 82.

Ages? And if they are so preserved, would not repeating them in succeeding Ages be unnecessary? When Error and Corruption have been once conquered, and the true Religion established by the Help of Miracles; why are not such Miracles when recorded by proper Hands sufficient to support and preserve it? The *Considerer* calls upon us to shew, *What lasting Monuments we have of them, by which they may be clearly evidenced, and may appear true against all Contradiction*^d. He needs not go to the Place in which they were wrought, where only he thinks such Monuments are to be found^e. They are much nearer home, than he is willing to believe; they are already in his own Hands, if he knew how to use them, and set a just Value on them. The Gospels are the Monuments, wherein those Miracles are recorded, and he must prove them to be all a Forgery, before he can with Reason complain for want of authentic Monuments; which he will find it no easy Matter to do, against the Testimony of all Antiquity, of the Enemies of Christianity, as well as its Friends.

I have now gone through the material Things, and to my own Sorrow, many immaterial Things in the *Considerer's* Book. When the Book first appeared, it seemed to require no Answer; and to those who can judge of the Weight of Arguments, it required none. But

^d Ib.^e P. 92. First Edit. p. 76.

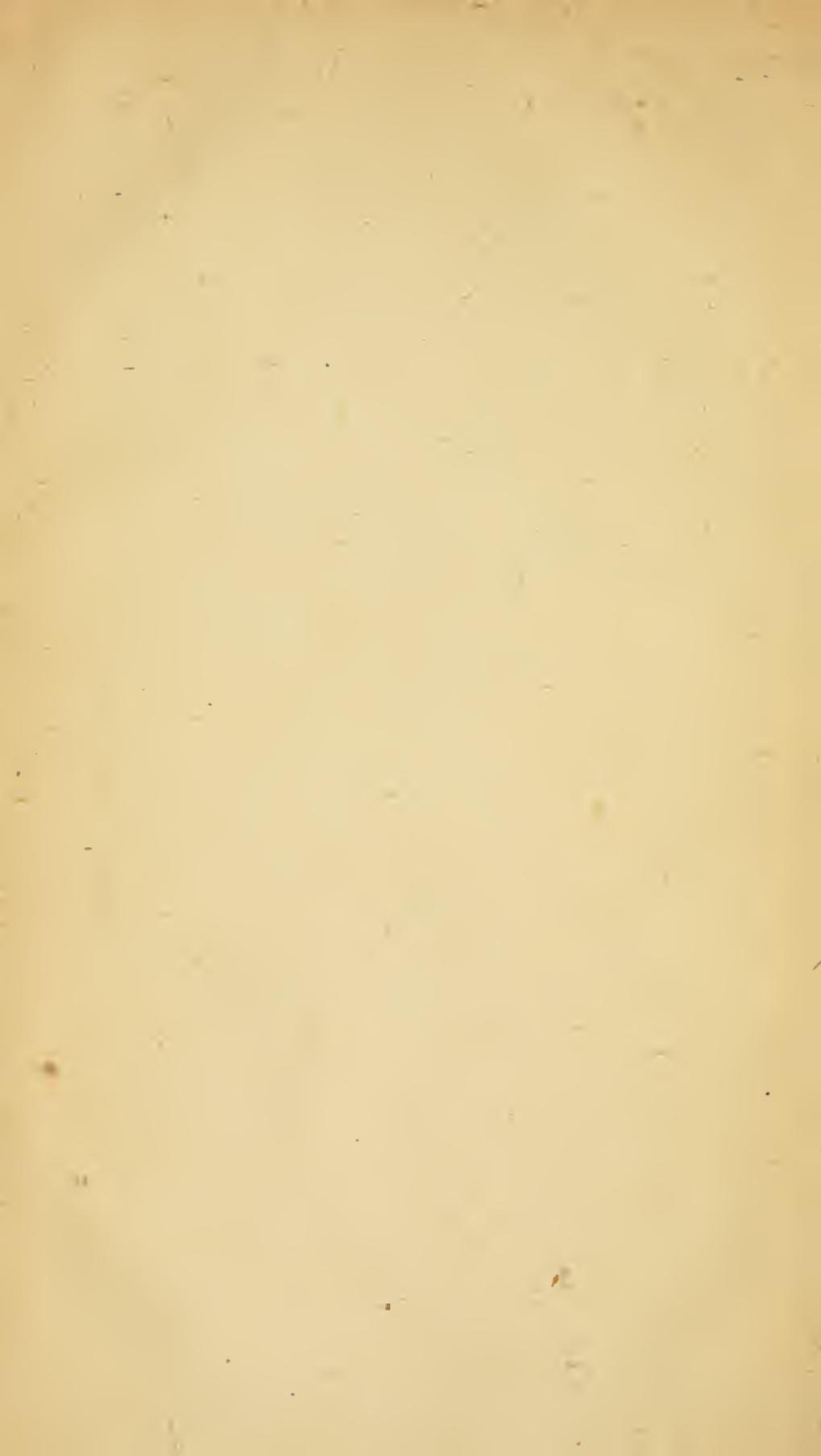
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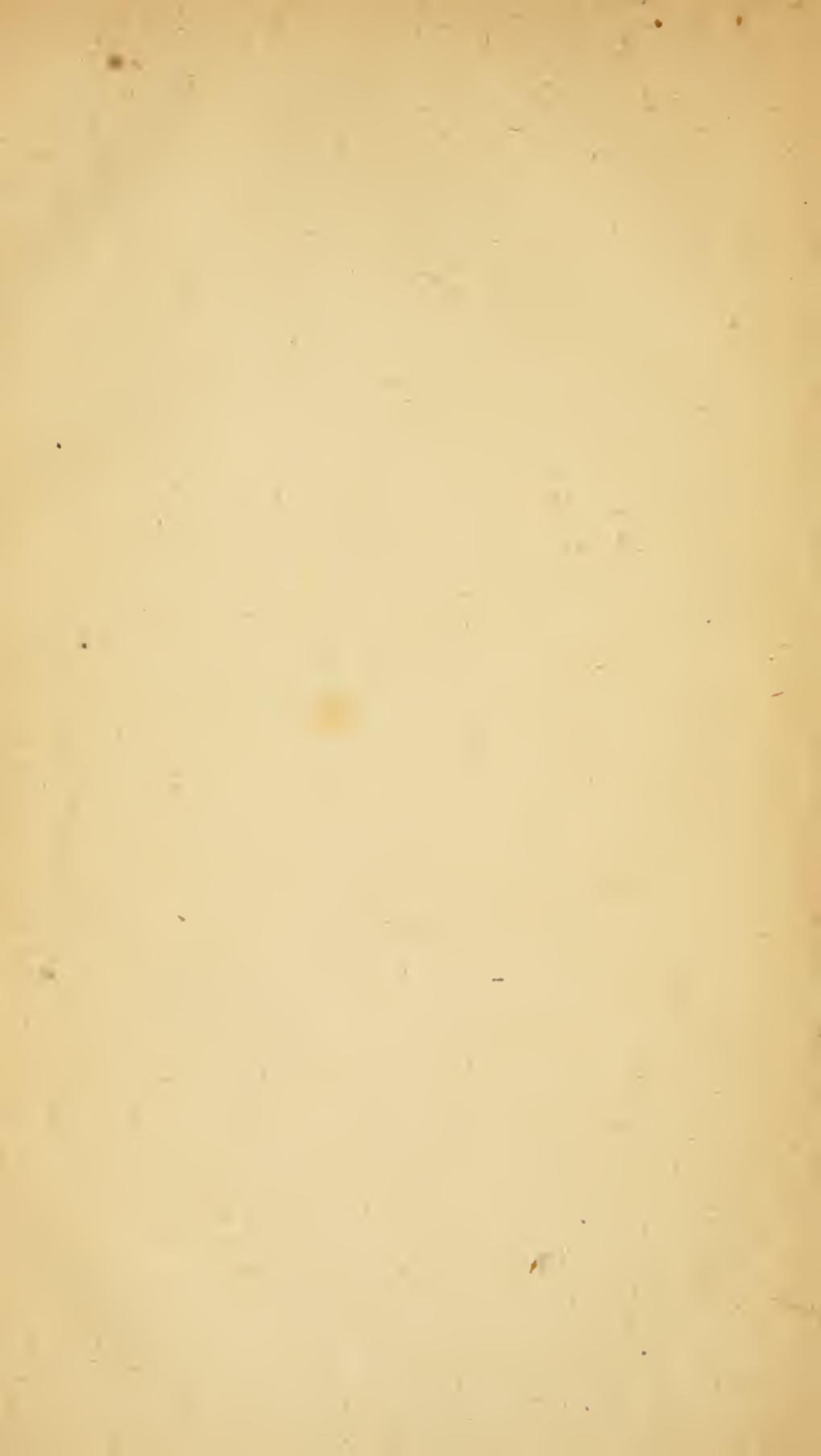
when it came into the Hands of those who were not able to see how they were imposed on, the Case was altered. For their Sakes this Answer was prepared, and is now published. One Thing at least they may learn from these Papers, not to trust a Man, who abuses Religion out of Love to Truth. It is not Scripture he attacks, whatever he pretends ; but Scripture distorted and perverted. Look over the pretended Answer to the *Tryal* ; where is there an Argument of any Weight, that is built up on a true Representation of Scripture ? I will not say that all his Mistakes of this Kind are wilful ; many of them, I am afriad, are so. But I judge him not.

F I N I S.











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